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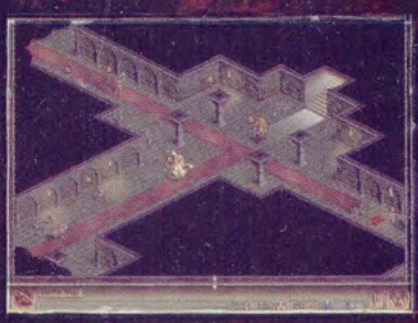

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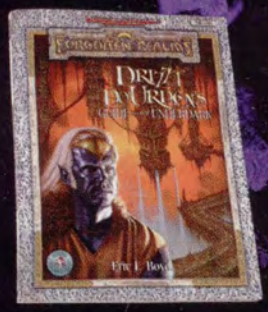
ON THE COVER

Mark Nelson, when asked to comment on his painting for this month's cover, had only three words to say: "Thank you, Elizabeth!" Elizabeth, one of Mark's former students and the model for this painting, returned for three photo sessions, as Mark submitted about a dozen figure sketches before we all felt that her posture was correct. It's interesting to note that, in contrast, we loved the giant fossilized skeleton at first sight.

Game Knights at



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Eric L. Boyd
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The famous drow ranger sheds some light on "the night below." Included within are reports on the drow, duergar, illithid, derro, aboleth, kuo-toan, svirfneblin, and dwarves, as well as the cities in which they dwell.
Drizzt also includes a few survival tricks he's perfected over the years, making this an essential guide for any adventurer intent on descending into the depths.

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Chris Pramas
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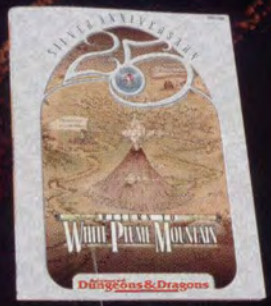

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Bruce R. Cordell
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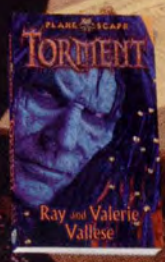

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The Wyrm's Turn™

Special Guest Star

Our Dungeon Master, Chris Perkins, is amazingly well prepared for his game sessions. Not only does he compose pages of notes ahead of time, but he draws beautiful maps on the conference room whiteboard before each game, scrolling them around to save them for when the moment's right to "raise the curtain." His games are theatrical in many other ways. For instance, he writes the names of all the player characters on another white board. As we enter the room, it's like seeing the opening credits of our own weekly TV show.

This past week, the credits included a "Special Guest Star."

Dave Noonan is the managing editor for TOPDECK™ magazine and the only one over there I haven't beaten at cards. He doesn't usually have Wednesday nights free, but this week was an exception, and he was dying to playtest the 3rd Edition rules.

Dave was playing a gnome named Erellak Golgof, an associate of our party's own gnomish "acquisitions specialist." Since three of our friends were trapped in the royal dungeon, it seemed reasonable to call in a specialist to help extricate them from their predicament.

Friends don't let friends play NPCs.

Our problems began when Jeff Quick's elf barbarian, Sevet, didn't want to trust the newcomer. Fortunately, Jeff never lets his roleplaying get in the way of moving the adventure forward, so it didn't take long to persuade him to accept Erellak's help. We didn't lose much time arguing about his fee, either. Our group is a lot more interested in the story than in wealth. (Well, except for the gnomes.) The only sticking point was that we already had a pretty good plan for liberating our friend, and we weren't much interested in an alternative. Still, Erellak's *invisibility* spells proved very helpful, especially when Droo, Sean's dwarven warrior, delayed our escape to beat the snot out of a prisoner he suspected of collaborating with the jailers.

Despite that minor wrinkle, we made it out of the palace, through the sewers, and back to the safety of the temple of Pelor. We had time to fetch a few personal items and even to go shopping for a new ax for Droo before hightailing it to Erellak's fabulous airship. Unfortunately, our escape had not gone completely unnoticed, and soon we were pursued by a trio of hieracosphinxes.

To our glee, our new comrade Erellak deftly maneuvered through a cloud of *iambrae*, giant floating jellyfish that gather around the aerie city of Rethek. At last, the mercenary gnome proved worth every gold piece we'd paid him.

When a Yuridri (sky gypsy) soar whale descended on us, we knew we could count on Erellak to help us fight them off. Already impressed with his spellcasting, my monk didn't think twice when the gnome instructed him to tie a rope to himself and the airship, then leap out at the attackers as Erellak cast a *fly* spell on him. Without a moment's hesitation, my fearless monk leaped over the rail … only to fall 50 feet straight down and be nearly cut in half by the unyielding snap of the rope.

At the same moment, Erellak's crew turned on my companions, ordering them to drop their weapons and prepare to surrender to the Yuridri. Soon, even the dimmest of us (that would be *me*, on the rope) realized we'd been betrayed.

We should have seen it coming. Jeff's barbarian had the right idea, but we gave little more than lip service to his suspicions because we didn't want to make Dave feel unwanted or spoil Chris's plans for introducing him to the party. Little did we know how carefully those plans had been laid!

Fortunately, the gnomes had underestimated our ferocity and good luck. It took us the rest of the session and part of the next, but ultimately we destroyed the crew and the airship, fought off the Yuridri, and commandeered the traitors' vessel. (Granted, it was on fire, and they

The Ultimate Game Table

Miraculously, Chris's map of the Horned Tower survived a week of business meetings.

One perk of working at Wizards of the Coast is that we can use the fabulous conference rooms as our game table.

The long tables are surrounded by comfortable chairs, and since the room is set up for meetings, it's perfect for drawing everyone's attention to the DM while still letting you see and hear everyone in the room.

The best parts are the photocopying whiteboard and the flanking boards. While I'm a miniatures man, Chris uses markers to great effect, showing how our characters move across the map during combat with erasable pens. He keeps the initiative notes on a sideboard, and combat stays fast and exciting.

Do you have an amazing game table? Have you devised tricks to make the most of the space you have? Share your secret by sending us a letter and some photos of your gaming space.

didn't want it anymore, but it was ours!)

As for Dave's treacherous gnome, the last we saw of him was his dwindling form falling away from the airship after a well-deserved boot to the head. His last words sounded something like "feather fall!"

When players turn on their comrades, be prepared for the worst.

Those of us whose characters survived the flaming airship debacle have had some trust issues to overcome. It helped when Dave left for a trip, and we didn't have to look at his falsely innocent face. If it weren't for the summer deadlines, some of us would have taken a few personal days to recover from the betrayal. As it was, we managed to persevere despite the pain.

It was harder still to accept Monte Cook's druid as a new member of the party, and Monte knew it. When Chris noted his character's name under the same title as Dave's the week before, Monte cried, "I'm not the Special Guest Star!" Regardless, we were more worried about the druid than about our lone Yuridri prisoner. After all, the Yuridri wasn't a "Special Guest Star."

When Chris asked Monte to step outside the room for some private information, Monte cried, "No!" He knew what had happened to the last guy. Still, he went, and in his absence we arranged for Stan!'s gnome to spend the rest of the night in backstab range of the newcomer. That made us feel a little better.

If there's a lesson to be learned from this mess, it's probably that manipulating the players' expectations can be a useful tool in creating an artificial sense of trust—not to mention surprise and paranoia. While we blamed Dave for being a turncoat, it was really the DM who had engineered the whole ploy of creating false trust by introducing a villain in the guise of a player character.

Chris's clever trick reminded me of an adventure I ran in which a group of stealthy dopplegangers managed to kill Bob's cleric quietly. In private, I promised Bob bonus XPs for his next character for each of the other PCs he managed to lure away and "dispose of" while playing the role of the monster disguised as his cleric. While his cleric was a trustworthy companion to the other heroes and his own integrity was beyond reproach, Bob took to the task gleefully. The bonus XPs were attractive, but the idea of playing the monster had him pumped.

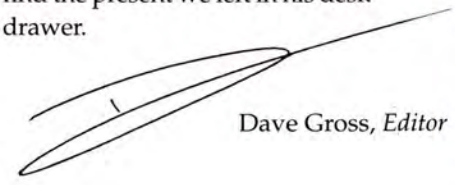
The first one was tricky, but after Bob tricked the ranger into helping him investigate something "over there," I made the same offer to her player. Now both of the NPC monsters had been "promoted" to PCs. Full of enthusiasm, they returned to the group in the forms of the dead heroes and proceeded to pick off the other PCs one by one.

None survived.

I'd expected the players to be mad at their treacherous companions, or at least at me for being such a ruthless DM, but a surprising thing happened. As each PC was "indoctrinated" into the doppleganger clan, his or her sense of loyalty shifted from the heroes' party to that of the monsters. Eventually, they enjoyed as much camaraderie as they'd had as a band of heroes. They even worked out a fair arrangement of shared bonus XPs for victims they slew together. While they all began as members of one group, they established a new team of traitors by the end of the ordeal. Well, everyone except for the last victim, who never got a chance to kill one of his former comrades. He was a little cranky.

Has your DM ever introduced a PC traitor to your group? How did it turn out? Better than it did for us, I hope. In retrospect, maybe our experience wasn't so bad. We had a great time, and we had the pleasure of tossing the gnome off his own airship. By the end, we'd forged stronger bonds among the original party members.

In fact, maybe we're being too hard on Dave. Ultimately, he made our group stronger. In any event, I'm sure we'll all feel better about him once he returns to find the present we left in his desk drawer.



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MUD Slinging

My question pertains to online role-playing. Most gamers today know about the graphical interface games out there, but the high costs of playing, numerous bugs, and slow connection speeds tend to take away from the gaming experience. Have you explored the incredible world of text-based, online roleplaying games?

I began playing these about four years ago when I was in college, because most game sites are free of charge. Today they make up for my lack of time to get together with a gaming group. They are roleplaying for the selfish gamer, a game that is there for you when you want to play, but without the hassles of gathering friends and having to schedule gaming events.

Have you explored the incredible world of text-based, online roleplaying games?

Most gamers that I know are avid multi-user dungeon (MUD) players and can share exciting and interesting tales. Since most of these game sites have a player base of anywhere from 40–400, and there are more gaming sites than I can count, I was wondering how the staff of *DRAGON® Magazine* views this trend in online gaming?

Also I am interested to hear whether Wizards of the Coast plans on making an official AD&D® game text-based site for the growing mass of players?

Christopher Cima
Dallas, TX

Not only have we heard of online role playing, but I ran as many as five online games a week earlier this decade. I miss those game sometimes, especially the players, but the most important thing they taught me is this: As wonderful as they can be if you don't have a local group, online sessions can't take the place of face-to-face gaming.

Back in issue #235, I mentioned some of the cool things about online gaming, most notably the fact that you can't see the other players, so you can visualize their characters better. It's advantageous to play online if you're a better writer than you are a speaker. (I once played a wizard who spoke only in iambic pentameter. I could never have done that face-to-face!) Ultimately, online roleplaying is as satisfying as a chess-by-mail game; it's great if you don't have a local group, but it's still a lot more fun to gather around a table where you can share pizza and throw dice at the worst punsters.

To check out our own online game room, turn to www.wizards.com/chat, and you'll see the schedule of games at our own site. In fact, GREYHAWK® adventure designer Sean Reynolds recently ran his "Malak Must Die" campaign online.

Text-based online gaming isn't nearly as popular as graphical-interface games, and the D&D® 3rd Edition game will have the best one when Neverwinter Nights is launched. For more on the multi-player internet game from Black Isle Studios, the people who brought you Baldur's Gate, check out **www.neverwinternights.com.**

A Bit About Maps

I totally agree with Joseph Collins, Jr. and his letter in issue #262.

I too enjoy crossover articles. They see a fair amount of use in my game, and I would definitely like to see articles like that more often. My favorites include "Rogues Gallery" articles tied to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® novels, and anything by Ed Greenwood.

I look forward to Mr. Greenwood's new articles. In the future, I sincerely hope that both he and the editors of *DRAGON Magazine* allow a continuation of the Volo's Guide series. By the way, the magazine should start with Volo's Guides to the Moonsea, the Vast, the Dragon Coast, and the locales in the recent supplements *Lands of Intrigue* and *Empires of the Shining Sea*.

I also thoroughly enjoyed "Elmshire" by Roger Moore. That is exactly the type of article I want to see in *DRAGON Magazine*. This village can be plunked down in any campaign with only a couple of changes. Now *that's* useful. My only complaints are about the maps (or lack thereof) in the magazine. The map of Elmshire was pretty, but it wasn't useful to a gamer.

I know the magazine needs colorful art, but the utility of each piece shouldn't be overlooked. Whatever happened to the golden days of TSR cartography? The town maps found in *L1 Secret of Bone Hill*, *T1 Village of Hommlet*, and the maps in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* book were cartography masterpieces. These, along with those maps found in most issues of *DUNGEON® Adventures*, are what I'd like to see.

Paul Hoyak
ranma@escape.ca

We've logged your requests, and we're sure that the upcoming Adventures of Volo will fit the bill. We'll also keep our eyes out for good mapping opportunities in future issues. In the meantime, feast your eyes on the Annual and the December issue, which boast plenty of FORGOTTEN REALMS material—including your favorite sort of "Rogues Gallery."

Bright Ideas

Since "Dungeoncraft" has appeared in the magazine, I have found that the exchange of ideas between players has improved with each issue. Also, Ray Winninger's ideas have inspired several interesting campaigns in our group. Here are two of them.

The first idea involves having the heroes find a large amount of money with which their vanquished enemy was trying to escape. This only works if the heroes already have enough moolah. If they do, an NPC or even one of the PCs might suggest giving the money to charity. Oops! The money is counterfeit, and now the heroes must defend themselves before the local authorities. Even being found innocent won't clear their names with some of the citizenry, making their future in that community interesting indeed.

My second suggestion was inspired by the Antiques Road Show on PBS. If one of the PCs is an expert on swords and famous sword-makers (living and dead), then seeing an NPC walking around with a sword he or she knows was forged by a long-dead master of the art should set the PC drooling just to touch the thing. What happens when the PC witnesses a friendly (or not-so-friendly) argument over the pedigree of the weapon? If the PC sticks his or her nose into the fray, friends or enemies can be made. If the PC turns out to be right—instant street credibility and, of course, other NPCs start appearing at the darndest times to ask if a certain weapon is worth anything. Saying yes or no might win the character a new friend or a disgruntled foe. Bystanders who simply watch the exchange from nearby, hoping for a specific answer, are a great source of surprise foes and allies, not to mention a potential source of rumors.

Thornton Kimes
Seattle, WA

DM of The Month

DM of the Month:
Peter Adkison

While we're waiting for your "Player of the Month" letters to arrive, we'll take this opportunity to kiss up to the boss.

While running a company of well over 1,000 employees demands a lot of attention, Peter Adkison still has had time to run the same AD&D campaign based in the world of Chaldea for nearly twenty years.

At one point, Peter was running three games a week, commandeering the main conference room and commissioning a horde of painted miniatures for his players' gaming pleasure. We'd do the same thing if we were in charge.

Jonathan Tweet, lead designer of the 3rd Edition D&D game and Chaldea player, says that the best thing about playing in Peter's campaign is that he never lets his own ideas stop the players from coming up with a great plan of their own.

In a recent game, the 7th–10th-level PCs found themselves facing a 30th-level villain employing a dancing sword, a black-lotus envenomed blade, and a platoon of flying halfling warriors and one alchemical cannon. (Hey, it's a fantasy game!) The heroes planned to even the odds somewhat by calling upon divine aid to dampen magic in the area. Of course, that would leave them without their own magical weapons ... until one of them thought to ask the assassin's guild for technological rather than magical assistance. Even though he hadn't considered the possibility of scientific weapons coming into play, Peter devised a solution on the spot, giving the creative players what they'd asked for. They took out the enemy without rolling a die.

"Three cheers for Peter," says Jonathan, "the DM who will let you completely undermine his carefully laid plans if you have a good idea."

More Cliché Twisting

I am writing in response to "The Wyrm's Turn" in issue #262 about clichés.

While in a large town, my PCs heard reports that people were disappearing. They discovered that a mage was kidnapping people, tracked him to his hideout, and finally had to kill him in battle. The PCs searched the hideout looking for treasure and the missing people, but all they found was the treasure.

However, the life-forces of the missing people were trapped in a valuable vase, a magical ring, and assorted other treasure—including the money. The people were still alive and could talk and see. The only one who knew how to get them out was the dead mage. The heroes took the living treasure back to the town and gave it to the family members, but they were stuck with some who didn't have family or didn't want to return, and they lost a lot of valuable treasure.

Aaron Pyne
Address Withheld

Tour de Force

I just returned from the L.A.'s "Silver Anniversary Tour," and I must say that I was impressed. The Waldenbooks staff was helpful, your RPGA® Network reps informative, and your designer/presenters listened and actually thought about what was being said. One asked me some questions about an idea I have had for years.

My idea is a CD-ROM published adventure where the DM inputs the level and size of his or her party and the computer adjusts the adventure to match, allowing the DM to easily use the adventures for parties of any size or level of group. After 10 minutes of discussion, she told me she might steal that idea (which I encouraged her to do post-haste), and there was no doubt about the sincerity of her interest in it.

Keep up this kind of grass roots work. It makes buyers aware of the seller's concerns and goals, reminding us that the folks at Wizards of the Coast are real people, and it reminds you that we know what we like and want.

Side Note: Does "(They Might Be) Against The Giants" in issue #262 follow a real They Might Be Giants tune? (I couldn't hear it if it does.) The cartoon itself was very funny.

I recently read *Return to The Keep on the Borderlands*, and I am impressed. It has a tight narrative style while still spreading out info where the DM might need it. The NPCs have character and history without eating up too much space from adventure details. Overall, there is a nice sense of balance throughout the product.

Michael DeMeritt
Castatic, CA

While the good people in the electronic products division have warned me not to reveal too much, I can tell you that the year 2000 will see the release of great electronic DM tools as a big part of the 3rd Edition D&D game release.

When we asked Aaron whether "(They Might Be) Against the Giants" fit any existing TMBG tune, he replied, "I wish it did! I tried to match it to any *of the songs, but they were too ... eclectic. Sadly, I had to stick to a kind of pseudo-limerick structure. However, if you sent a copy to TMBG, I'm sure they'd put it to music (assuming They Might Not Sue)."*

Cover to Cover

I recently realized that I'd let quite a stack of *DRAGON Magazines* stack up in my "to be read" pile. When I picked that stack up and began thumbing through it, I realized just how great the cover art has been recently.

I started reading *DRAGON Magazine* way back with issue #162, with its eerie October cover of a skeletal rider on a horse. That cover is a great, enduring image that has stuck with me throughout my exploration of the gaming hobby.

I bring that up because there was a time between then and now in which the covers of *DRAGON Magazine* were always of its namesake. While I love dragons, a steady diet of them is like a steady diet of anything: boring. Recent covers have been anything but typical or predictable. For issue #257 we had the Dark Ages fighters engaged in gory combat, which gave me a good start.

Issue #258, though, is one that I just sat staring at for awhile. It is absolutely gorgeous, and Todd Lockwood deserves every kudo possible. I can see why the piece became an office favorite.

Stephen Daniele's art for #259 was just as great a thematic switch from #258 as #258 was from #257. Daniele succeeded in bringing the jungle-infested ruins to eerie life.

Jeff Easley, one of my favorite artists, graced the cover of #260 with—what else?—a dragon. This simply proves my point that variety adds spice to life. Because this was the first dragon in a while, Easley's art was all the more impressive. If this had merely been one more in a long procession of dragons, it would have become less noticeable. In any case, almost no one can match Easley in making dragons come to life.

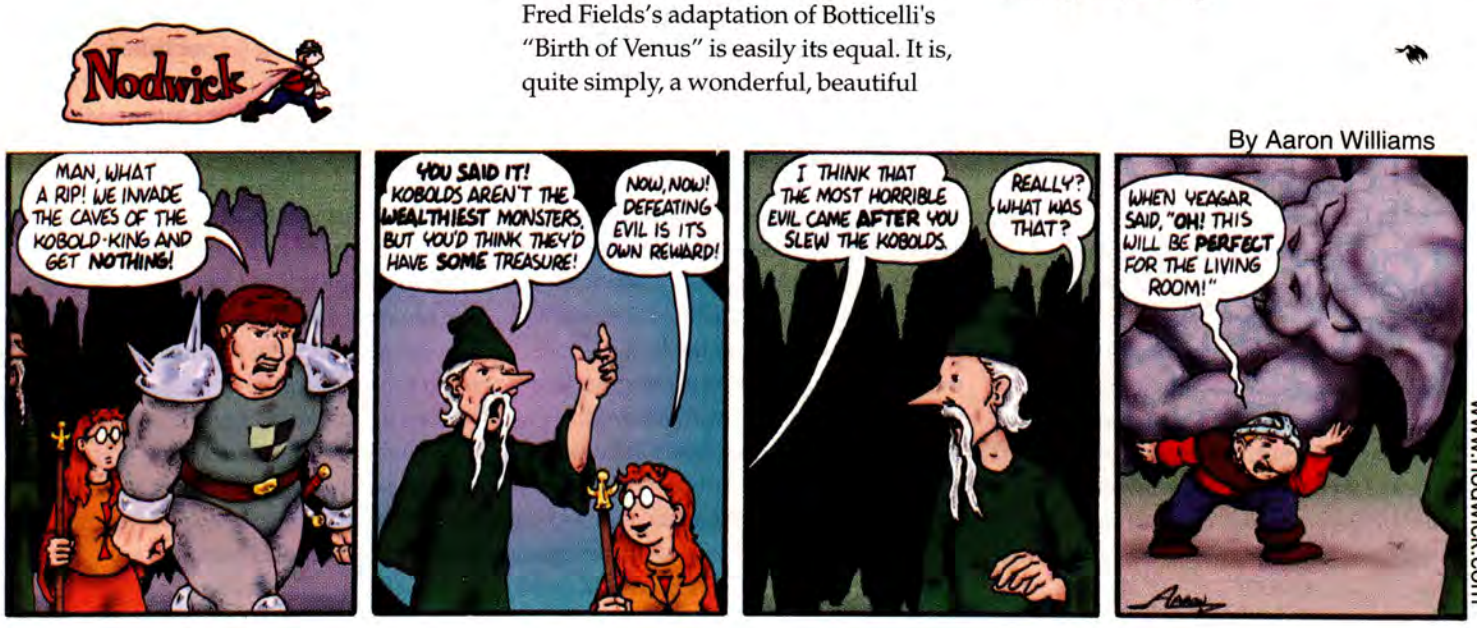
That brings us to issue #261. I didn't think Lockwood's cover to #258 would be matched for a good long while, but Fred Fields's adaptation of Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" is easily its equal. It is, quite simply, a wonderful, beautiful piece. I don't suppose the artists would be interested in selling the originals to these two issues?

Finally #262 (my 100th issue!) was adorned with a warm, friendly image of a halfling—probably the PC race with the fewest appearances on a cover of *DRAGON Magazine*.

This brings me to a final question: Why are you cropping the cover images? The cover for #257 is about the weirdest (since the interior and cover versions are apparently both cropped in different ways), but every issue in the span under discussion (with the exception of #258) has been cropped, with Easley's art for #260 suffering the worst.

Justin Bacon
Minneapolis, MN

Since we enjoy broad distribution these days, our covers must leap off the newsstand and mesmerize the casual consumer who might otherwise have slipped past unaware of the spectacular bargain of our humble periodical. Still, we haven't forgotten that fabulous artwork is one of the things that keeps our readers coming back, which is why we reproduce the cover—without text or so much cropping—right across from the table of contents. For a good example of how this can work in the best possible way, check out the cover and the interior reproduction of Michael Sutfin's Egyptian god on Issue #263. The outer version is perfect for a magazine cover, while the interior reproduction shows the sense of vast tranquility that Michael captured in the original painting.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Forum

Question of the Month

Respond to the Question of the Month or any other role-playing topic by mailing "Forum," Dragon® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA; dmail@wizards.com. Include your full name and mailing address; we won't print a letter sent anonymously. We'll withhold your name or print your full address if you wish.

DO YOUR PCS HAVE SOMETHING TO FIGHT AGAINST? OR DO THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO FIGHT FOR? IS THERE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR CAMPAIGN?

Those Wacky Dice

A friend of mine left a roleplaying session early and asked me to play his character while he was away. The character wore a *helm of brilliance*, and I wasn't overly concerned when an enemy spellcaster hurled a *fireball* at our party. I just shrugged when I rolled the saving throw, because with the bonuses from being a druid and wearing the *helm*, the character needed to roll only a 3 on a d20 to succeed.

Another surprise failure incinerated the poor dude.

I rolled a 2. According to the rules in the *DMG*, all of the character's items now had to make saving throws vs. magical fire, which I did for the *helm*. Another surprising failure incinerated the poor dude.

I was rather embarrassed, but I couldn't help it. The *helm of brilliance* detonated with all the remaining charges, dealing hundreds of points of damage to the druid.

Martin Rosenkranz
Bonn, Germany

The Rules

This letter is in response to the past Question of the Month, "What house rule has had the most impact on your game?"

As the years come and go, so rules come and go, these are always related to the current style of play, current players, and who is running the game. I found early on that the survivability of new characters was very slim if PCs had rolled low hit points to start. Many players have spent hours rolling statistics, choosing equipment, selecting proficiencies, and buying weapons, only to die after suffering 2 points of damage. In our game, 1st-level characters start with the maximum hit point total.

Another issue with the game was the weakness of the standard fighter classes. Nobody wanted to play the standard warrior because of the strengths of fighter kits. Their abilities are too limited when you can play a beast master and have a free wolf guardian or a barbarian who jumps about like a possessed kangaroo. Our group needed a way to make fighters playable again. We've been testing our remedy for over ten years, and these house rules are still popular with the players.

- Single-class warriors without kits have the maximum possible hit points at 1st and 2nd levels and a minimum of 5 hit points at 3rd level. Fighters with a kit must roll for hit points normally after 1st level.
- All single-class fighters can specialize in any number of weapons throughout their career, as long as they have the required proficiency slots. Fighters with kits are allowed to specialize in only two weapons maximum except for members of the swashbuckler kit, who are allowed four.
- Paladins and rangers are now allowed to specialize, as weapons are as important as their other skills. However, they are restricted in the weapons they can wield. Paladins can specialize in a horseman's weapon and a sword. Rangers can specialize in a missile weapon and a melee weapon.

The above rules allow standard fighters to succeed in melee against the exotic mymidons, champions, battle ragers, and cavaliers of the game world. They have more hit points, more weapons, and more skill.

Players are now as interested in playing a simple fighter as they are in playing a multiclassed cleric/mage/thief.

Gordon Dunne
Telford, England

Monstrous Monks

I have several problems with Dirk Keaton's letter from *DRAGON Magazine* Issue #262.

First of all, combat in the AD&D® game is abstract. None of us are in danger of mistaking it for reality, so trying to inject more "reality" into it is silly.

Secondly, you simply cannot perform "7–10 hand techniques" in the time it takes to swing a sword. Keaton says you can make that many attacks in "the time it takes to attack with a sword," and this is different. What Mr. Keaton evidently does not realize is that, although a low-level PC might attack only once in one round, that does not mean he swings the sword once. There are many parries, feints, and blocks happening in that round. You might be able to make 7–10 hand attacks, but you

should not and will not get an attack roll for all of them. Also, take into account that many times unarmed combatants are fighting armed and armored opponents. In a "realistic" combat system, armed attackers should be allowed an attack of opportunity because the martial artist must spend at least some of their time getting close enough to strike.

I do agree that 2 attacks per round with martial arts is too few, but if the DM is amenable, characters can take Two Weapon style specialization and Ambidexterity, allowing another attack. That's three attacks per round at 1st level —much faster than a warrior.

Furthermore, why should monks get to make one or two called attacks without rolling? I'm not sure whether this means without a penalty, which is ludicrous, or as an automatic hit, which is much worse. And why should a monk who makes a series of identical attacks get three to five more attacks? That's more than most high-level fighters get per round.

As for the assertion that monks should be more dangerous than fighters with swords, they easily can be. The easily taken Tumbling proficiency gives them a +2 bonus to their attack roll; their Strength bonus can improve that, and they receive +1/+2 bonus at 1st level if they specialize, which improves at 5th level if they learn mastery. I have an 8th-level monk who gets 3 attacks per round, and due to Tumbling, mastery, and a Muscle of 18/00 (+3/+6), his total bonus is +8/+9—three times a round!

This is at 8th level, true, but what more does he want?

There is one change I would make to the abilities of skilled (specialized or better) martial artists, though. Given how easy it is to knock opponents unconscious with unarmed attacks, I would allow monks to cause half again or perhaps even double their normal damage if they attempt to subdue, or let them make called shots to try and knock their opponents out.

Ian Mathers
Kincardine, Ontario

I Cannot Tell a Lie

"When is it all right for the DM to give blatantly false information to the players?"

Well, that depends. I make it plain to all my players that "ex cathedra" I will not lie, or fudge.

However, when speaking in the character of an NPC, I can and will lie like a rug if that is what the NPC would do. I am careful to note the difference between description and dialogue.

Likewise I don't append "You see an illusionary _____" to illusions, nor do I blurt out the location of secret or hidden things. I describe illusions as if real and make the PCs look for the hidden stuff. However, those are the natures of illusions and hidden things. The truth is concealed.

I would say it is never right for the DM to blatantly state false information; the game is verbal, after all, and the players are totally dependent on the DM to describe, in words, all that their characters experience, in vision, touch, taste, smell, or hearing. Falsifying this information without good cause, such as in describing an illusion, is abusing the DM is advantage.

To abuse the DM advantage is to abuse the players' trust.

However, in the role of an NPC, and speaking for that character, the DM has no obligation outside whatever obligation the NPC feels to express the truth in any fashion.

To abuse the DM is advantage is to abuse the players' trust. I certainly wouldn't play twice with a DM who did it, nor expect a player to return to my game if I did so. The point behind the D&D® game and roleplaying in general is not to "win" but to have fun. With their advantage, DMs could "win" every time at the expense of the players. Such DMs will not have players long.

Garry Stahl
Dearborn, MI

Improving the Basic Soldier

In my game, I like to have the players be a part of the feudal structure of the campaign world. I also like them to build strongholds, found baronies, and so on. There is a set of ambiguities in the rules, however, that causes some difficulty: namely how to treat ordinary soldiers.

The *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*® says soldiers should have 1d8+1 hp and not be able to rise in experience. On the other hand, the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ tome gives them 1d6 hp, which makes them inferior to orcs and even goblins. Some adventure material makes them 1st-level fighters with either 1d10 hp or 1d6+4 hp. I would much like to see a fixed way to determine hit points, proficiencies, and other abilities for human soldier and warrior types.

I think it would be best if full-time soldiers, barbarian warriors, and men-at-arms were rated as 1st-level fighters without weapon specialization. They would then be balanced with orcs and hobgoblins on a one-to-one basis. The humans would have slightly better hit-point average, but the humanoids still have a better THAC0. Part-time soldiers—like pirates, bandits, and militia men—should have 1d6+1 hp, making them about equal to goblins. I would reserve the 1d6 hp die for civilians and others not involved in any weapons or military training.

Increasing the power of ordinary humans slightly is important in explaining how they can keep their place in a world where there are huge numbers of rapidly breeding humanoids. It also is important to increase their hit points a little because of the damage bonuses of weapon specialization. Without weapon specialization, an average spear thrust (1d6) takes down an average man (1d6) half of the time. With weapon specialization, the lowest possible damage roll (1+2=3) takes out an average human half of the time.

Finally, I find the relatively feeble status of ordinary humans a bit troubling for running the campaign. Once characters reach 2nd-level, they begin to feel the don't have to listen to the town guard anymore. Once they

reach 3rd- or 4th-level, they can destroy wilderness patrols of soldiers with ease. Once they reach 6th-level or so, they begin to push around nobles who have small armies. I think a modest upswing in soldier power would help this situation a bit.

David L. Nelson
Dallastown, PA

Pointless Bickering

This bickering about what class or classes are the most powerful is a waste of time. Any class can be made the most powerful if you have a rules lawyer or a power gamer playing in your game.

I've seen power gamers take a *chime of hunger,* attach strings to it so it could be played like a puppet outside of the danger zone, put it over a group of heroes in conjunction with the spell *spectral force,* and destroy four paladins, two priests, one ranger, two bards, and a mage/fighter with a powerful kit.

What is the most powerful character class? Any character with high statistics played by a creative thinker.

On a note related to the house rules discussion started by a previous Question of the Month, when I'm DMing, the last thing a player rolls are character statistics. The character's statistics are then raised to the minimums needed for the chosen class. The best thing about this system is that players are finished with their characters' creation in about 2 hours.

I like using advantages and disadvantages in my games, and kits are treated as both advantages and disadvantages, with a focus or class limitation. My only requirement is that the benefits and hindrances for each character must cancel each other out.

During the game, if a character lost a eye and doesn't get it healed, he or she can add the appropriate number of points to the character points the player has available. The only restriction to this is that the advantage, just like the disadvantage, must first be acquired through play.

Other changes I have made allow characters to advance in level in any of three ways. I dislike being forced to create a teacher for the players' characters every time they advance in level.

First, I have on-the-adventure training, which means that a player keeps any experience they have earned, but they function as though three levels lower. For instance, a 1st-level thief is hiding out or exploring the outside world. Without a teacher or self-training, the thief becomes a 2nd-level thief when he or she has accumulated 5,000 experience points.

Alternatively, if the character had spent the time, money, and effort to build a personal training camp, the thief could have gained 2nd level with only 2,500 experience points.

Finally, characters can find a teacher for whatever they're training to learn. Remember, the snake style kung fu was learned first from studying snakes, and good teachers work with students outside of their own class. In this case, they learn from training with a professional instructor. If the thief in question studies under an appropriate teacher, he or she can advance after acquiring the standard 1,250 experience points.

For proficiencies, I use a chart like the age table instead of Intelligence, giving two common skills a year to each player.

David Pierce
Davis, CA

Priests and Powers

I have been playing the AD&D game since the early years of the game. I have seen the growth and the changes in all the classes. There is one class that has been getting bad press—the priest. In issue #261, one of the "Forum" letters stated that the priest is the most powerful class. I would like to remind everyone of some limitations of the priest that no other class must deal with.

"Medic" is a title that most priests have to deal with. Just because some priests have the ability to heal, all players think healing is a priest's only job. I have had games in which the players shun a PC priest who cannot or will not heal someone. What non-priest players have to remember is that a priest is only as powerful as his or her god allows.

Priest have no need to study, but they do have to do their patron deity's will every hour of every day. One transgression often means a difficult quest of atonement. If a PC priest has not been a good follower, then his or her patron will not be pleased. The character might even be in for a lesson, whether it involves reduced spell access or another penalty. Players forget that the priests have no power of their own; they are vessels through which their gods work.

They get armor and weapons. This depends on both the Dungeon Master and the priest's patron deity. Some priests cannot take a life for any reason. Some cannot wear ordinary armor. Yes, the classic cleric in the *PH* can wear armor and can only use non-edged weapons, but so many different specialty priests are in play that generalizations like this are impossible to make.

Priests can use any spells they want. This often-cited example of a priest's power is simply not true. When priests pray, they ask their god for a spell. Players of other classes often forget that. Nothing is certain about priestly magic. If a mage studies a spell, he or she knows it until it is cast.

On the flip side, priests are at their best when giving it all for their patrons. They might be picked for more important work or given a more powerful spell. In one game, we had to defend an ancient temple from destruction. As our 3rd-level priest cast his last *cure light wounds* spell on another (even though it was the priest who was the most severely wounded), he got knocked out with a flash of light. It was his patron's temple that we were defending, and the power was happy that its follower had made the correct choices. The priest's *cure light wounds* spell opened the path for the power to boost it to *heal* with a 20' radius.

Roy Greenhalgh
Address Withheld

On the flip side, priests are at their best when giving it all for their patrons.

"You say you fired on the suspect?"

"That's what I'm trying to tell you..."

"What is it, Jennings?"

"Sand, sir. There's...there's nothing but sand where the body should be."

"Did anybody see you?"

"Negative. Sir..."

"Good. Get out of there right now...there are probably more of them."

"More of what, sir...?"

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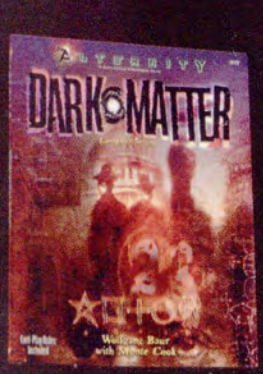

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By Ray Winninger

In this month's installment, we continue the discussion of wilderness maps begun last issue. Then we'll sketch out a wilderness map, depicting the areas the players will explore over the first few months of the campaign.

Last month, we left off by identifying the characteristics of a good, useful local wilderness map. This time, we'll look at four more important elements to consider when constructing a good local area map. Before continuing, however, remember the first three steps described last issue:

1. **Start With the Familiar**
2. **Include the Unknown**
3. **Plan Ahead for Adventures**

4. Integration of the Local Economy

Presumably, the citizens of your make-believe cities and villages must somehow find food, clothing, and shelter. This means they must have direct access to these necessities or access to skills or resources they can trade for the necessities. Obviously, the manner in which you solve this problem can and should have a tremendous impact on your area map.

Because food transportation and preservation technology is relatively unsophisticated in the typical AD&D® world, most populations should have direct access to a food source capable of supplying at least half the food needed to sustain the population—and usually quite a bit more than that. Food might be secured by hunting, herding, foraging (harvesting wild nuts, berries, and fruit), or agriculture. Hunting obviously implies that plenty of wild game lives in the area. Herding implies that there are ample and convenient grazing lands somewhere on the map. Agriculture implies the presence of farmlands and water sources. Once you've figured out where the food comes from, don't forget to give some thought to how it is distributed. Do the villagers feed upon grain grown by farmers who live in the fertile valley on the village's outskirts? If so, there is probably a trail leading from the village into the valley and one or two checkpoints along that trail to provide protection.

When designing your local area map, don't forget about the local economy.

Anything the population needs and can't supply for itself (additional food, building materials, goods) must be secured through trade. Think about what it is that your local population typically offers in exchange for these necessities. Do your villagers work a mine in the area and trade ores for the other goods they need to survive? Do the villagers produce excess food they can trade? Are the villagers skilled craftsmen who can trade their services? If your society relies upon trade for a number of the necessities, the placement of trade routes on your area map is obviously very important.

While answering these questions can give you important insights into how to construct your area map, at this stage you don't want to spend a lot of time devising a complex treatise on the local economy. Don't forget the First Rule of Dungeoncraft! Your goal is to generate some ideas for your local area map and a few scant details you can use to help explain the area to the players. You can work out all the specific whys and wherefores of the economy later, if and when they become relevant.

The Ironoak area map depicts only two civilized populated areas: the Ironoak stronghold itself and a small town located a couple days' travel from the stronghold. The stronghold's economy is somewhat unusual in that the

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http://www.wizards.com/dragon/Welcome.asp

fort and many of its inhabitants (the various soldiers and such) are entirely funded and supported by the nearby kingdom of Umbria. Ironoak plays an important role in Umbria's defense and the kingdom dispatches regular caravans to the stronghold to guarantee that the soldiers have everything they need. Basically, the soldiers are trading a service (their skill at arms) for all their necessities. Ironoak is also home to a number of small shops and businesses that cater to the many merchants and travelers who stop at the stronghold on their way to the frontier. Most of the food consumed in Ironoak consists of imported grain and salted meats, though the local innkeepers supplement their menus with live game from the surrounding forests. All of these things suggest that important, well-defended trade routes lead in and out of the stronghold.

As for the nearby town, the bulk of its inhabitants trade a combination of resources and services. The town, called "Redheath," is known throughout all of Umbria as home to the finest armorers, weaponsmiths, and blacksmiths in the kingdom. It's built upon a series of flat, stony plateaus in the midst of the great forest. At the base of these plateaus lies the entrance to a rich iron mine. Hundreds of travelers, adventurers, and merchants from all over Umbria visit Redheath each year with new challenges for its highly skilled laborers. Those inhabitants of the town who are not involved in the smithing or mining operate businesses that cater to these visitors.

One peculiar feature of the Ironoak map is the complete absence of farmland. Those of you who have followed this column over the past year might remember that the Aris campaign is set on a dense forest world. Lands well suited to cultivation are scarce, forcing most of the inhabitants of the world to rely upon imported foodstuffs. This makes the supply lines between settlements particularly important. Wars on Aris are usually won by blocking the enemy's supply routes and cutting off their access to food.

5. Monster Lairs

It's difficult to imagine an AD&D game world that isn't populated by a wide variety of monsters. Obviously, all of those monsters have to live somewhere. The first thing to understand about placing monster lairs on your area map is that it isn't necessary to determine every single monster that lives on the map before beginning play; in fact, it's a bad idea. Later, as the campaign progresses, you'll have all sorts of ideas for adventures, some of which might depend upon the presence of specific monsters. Unless you leave your map somewhat vague, giving yourself the ability to introduce new monsters in previously unexplored areas when necessary, you'll find it difficult to run these adventures.

For now, you should concentrate on placing just a few, major monster lairs in the area. The general presence of most of these monsters is probably known to many of the region's inhabitants, though the specific locations of the lairs and the exact nature of the creatures in question may well be a mystery. In other words, if an owlbear lives in the vicinity, the locals might be aware of a terrible beast that lives in the woods and a rash of disappearances attributed to the beast, but they probably don't know where the beast lives or what sort of beast they're dealing with.

For a map the size we've been dis-

Monster Lairs of Ironoak

A quick flip through the *Monstrous Manual*™ tome turns up at least four interesting monsters for the Ironoak region: ankhegs, dryads, giant spiders, and a small pack of kenku. The next step is to describe each one in a little detail.

- **The ankhegs have dug a series of tunnels in a rotted patch of forest that lies near Redheath; they feed upon the rotting vegetation and the occasional deer. To make things more interesting, a small band of goblin thieves (outcasts from one of the tribes living in the Black Wood) hides in the ankheg tunnels and uses them to raid small merchant bands traveling in and out of Redheath. The locals are well aware of the goblin raids, but they can't figure out where the pests are hiding; no one save the goblins knows anything about the ankhegs.**

- **The dryads live in a grove located just outside Ironoak. They are the servants of the Elders of the Wood, the four oldest oak trees on Aris. The Elders' seeds were planted by the Goddess herself. The priests of Aris believe that, as a sign of respect for their elders, none of the oaks of the forest drops its leaves in the fall until after the elders have dropped their own. The dryads were dispatched by the Goddess to tend to these favored trees long ago. While none of the locals (save the priests) are aware of the existence of the dryads, their singing can often be heard on the pathways near their sacred grove.**

- **The giant spiders maintain a huge web that stretches through the forest near the road from Ironoak to Redheath; they occasionally prey upon unlucky travelers in the region. The locals are well aware of the webbed woods and avoid them at all costs.**

- **The kenku have no fixed home but roam the woods near Ironoak. Their ancestors were raised from eggs by a powerful priest of Aris several generations ago. Ever since, they have remained in the area performing special services for the priesthood; only high-ranking priests are aware of their existence. The kenku are masters of a powerful fighting art akin to kung fu and have all the abilities of the monk class. Somewhere down the road, they might be persuaded to teach their art to an appropriately worthy player character. Not even the kenku know exactly where they originated or whether there are any more of their kind on the planet.**

cussing, try to identify three to five major monster lairs. Since this area is intended to serve as the starting point for your campaign, most of the monsters you select should have seven or fewer Hit Dice, although it's okay to toss in one or two more powerful monsters, as long as they're fairly isolated from most of the area's inhabitants. You should select these monsters before you start drawing the map. That way, you can make sure that each creature's special terrain needs are reflected in your drawing.

As you select the monsters, take a few moments to think about the role each might play in the campaign and what the local inhabitants know about the creature. Is the monster a predator who sometimes preys upon the local population? A highly intelligent creature that is carrying out some sort of fiendish plot? An ally to a local noble or government? Also, don't forget that not all monsters are evil. You might want to place at least one good monster in your campaign area to assist the players in their adventures. Once you come up with a few details about each of your major monsters, if one or more of them appear to be particularly important to your campaign environment, don't forget the Second Rule of Dungeoncraft. Each particularly important creature deserves its own secret.

Suppose, for instance, that the adventurers are camped out at night, and that you've just rolled a random encounter. If you glance at your map and notice that the party has crossed into the hunting grounds of the owlbear you placed earlier, you now have all sorts of opportunities to spice up this encounter. Perhaps the players encounter the owlbear itself and realize after hearing its distinctive growl that they must be facing the terrible beast rumored to be hunting unlucky travelers from the nearby forest. Alternately, the players might encounter a merchant who was just chased off the trail by the owlbear, or a young man who managed to escape from the owlbear's lair and begs the players to return with him to save his sister, who is still in the beast's ghastly clutches.

Before deciding where to place your monster lairs, choose the monsters by browsing the *Monstrous Manual* tome. Depending on the nature of your campaign world, you might find different monsters more appropriate. For the Aris campaign, several choices appear in the "Monster Lairs of Ironoak" sidebar.

Taking a look at the list, the kenku and the dryads are each worthy of a secret as per the Second Rule of Dungeoncraft. Let's say that the kenku who live near Ironoak are the only such creatures on Aris. They were hatched from jeweled eggs that a high-level thief once stole from the nest of a powerful owl spirit that lived on the Astral Plane. The priest who hatched the original kenku noticed that the "gems" stolen by the thief were actually eggs. Due to his respect for the sanctity of life in all its forms, he bought the eggs and hatched them. To make matters more interesting, the owl spirit originally laid the eggs to repay a debt to a powerful extradimensional entity. She meant to hatch the eggs, birthing the kenku as a race of servitors who could serve as the entity's heralds. Since the eggs were stolen before they hatched, though, she was forced to default on her debt. Now, almost two hundred years later, she still languishes in a gilded cage in the entity's palace. The kenku would give a great deal to learn the story of their birth, and once they learn, they will almost certainly mount an expedition to rescue their creator.

As for the dryads, an incredibly valuable diamond necklace was stolen from a noblewoman passing through Ironoak roughly two months before the campaign begins. When the noblewoman finally departed, she left the captain of her personal bodyguard at the stronghold to continue the effort to locate the thief and return her property. Unknown to everyone, the necklace was stolen by one of Ironoak's officers, a personal assistant to Tarrin (see *Dragon Magazine* #261). While out wandering the woods around the stronghold, the officer encountered one of the dryads and succumbed to her *charm* spell. He later stole the necklace and returned to present it to the dryad as a love offering. Now, months later, he continues to visit the dryad and uses whatever influence he has to stall the bodyguard's investigation. Ultimately, the players should stumble across this little mystery and investigate.

Good maps include plenty of hard-to-reach areas the DM can reserve for higher-level adventures.

6. Hard-to-Reach Areas

A good map should tease the players and present them with hints of obvious challenges. You should strive to place two or three locations on your area map that are particularly hard to reach, preferably beyond the capabilities of the player characters as the campaign begins. Later, you can drop interesting hints about what the players might find in these areas, increasing the temptation to explore them. Over time, reaching the areas is likely to become a miniature puzzle that the players devote a lot of effort to solving, making sure they remain within the confines of this first map for as long as possible. The key is to make sure the players are not disappointed once they manage to get past the obstacles you put in their path. Fortunately, you'll have a long time to think about what might await them. There's no reason to figure out exactly what lies in your hard-to-reach areas just yet. Wait until the players are getting close to

When it comes time to place the lairs on your map, take advantage of the opportunity to plot as much useful information about the creature as possible. If the creature is a predator, for instance, you might draw a dotted circle around its lair indicating the rough boundaries of its hunting ground. If the creature regularly travels or migrates, indicate its route(s) on the map. The real purpose of placing these lairs on the map in the first place is to provide you with inspiration for creating events and situations the players might encounter on their travels. Adding secondary details like these helps to accomplish that mission.

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Map rendered by Dan Gough

Marking the boundaries of predatory monsters makes an area map even more useful.

finally penetrating them.

There are many strategies you can employ to make an area hard to reach. An obvious possibility is to surround the locale with dangers that are beyond the adventurers' means to overcome. For instance, you might place a sacred canyon said to house the entrance to an ancient ruined city on your area map. The entrance to the canyon is guarded by two iron golems left by the former inhabitants of the ruined city to protect their secrets. Obviously, there's no way a party of 1st-level characters can deal with the golems, so it will take the players several months to penetrate the mystery. During this time, they'll have fun looking for alternate means of entering the canyon, exploring various magical means of sneaking past the golems and so forth, all while tackling other adventures they've stumbled across. Other means you can use to create hard to reach areas include: formidable terrain (unclimbable mountains), mazelike trails, and even more "fantastic" barriers (such as mountain passes that open only when the correct password is spoken or cities that magically appear only once every decade).

A couple of possibilities for hard to reach areas around Ironoak naturally suggest themselves. In an earlier installment, we considered a series of "wandering paths" that surround Ironoak (see *Dragon Magazine* #264). Many of the trees surrounding the paths are actually treants. As outsiders enter their wood, the treants move, subtly shifting the paths and leaving the outsiders hopelessly lost. Somewhere, in the middle of this wood lies something incredible. To reach it, the players must learn that the treants exist and figure out how to deal with them. A second hard-to-reach area is suggested by the spider lair mentioned earlier in this column. Imagine a huge grove blanketed in thick, giant spider webs coated with sticky tree resin. Together these webs form a vast maze that's home to hundreds of giant spiders and other insects. Over time, we can spread some rumors about a fantastic treasure said to be lost somewhere in the webs. Although tackling so many giant spiders is well beyond the players means when the campaign begins, eventually they'll become powerful enough to make their way through the webs to uncover the wood's secrets.

7. Clue Pointing to a Secret

Thanks to the Second Rule of Dungeoncraft you should already know lots of secrets about your game world. Secrets are useless, though, without the clues the players need to uncover them. Before you finish thinking about your area map, pull out the "deck of secrets" you should be keeping (see *Dragon Magazine* #259) and draw a card. Try to create a clue pointing to this secret and place it somewhere on your area map. If you're feeling particularly confident or have a particularly large deck, go ahead and pull two cards and try to cover them both.

The secret I've drawn is Tarrin's Wandering Hand (see *Dragon Magazine* #261). As you might recall, Tarrin, the captain of Ironoak's guard, cut off his own hand years ago to escape the effects of a hideous curse. Unknown to Tarrin, though, the hand is now a living being and has been slowly "crawling" its way across the countryside for several years, looking for him. An obvious clue I can plant on the map pointing toward this secret is the location where the amputation took place. Somewhere out in the woods, in a relatively civilized area, lies the bloodied rock upon which Tarrin did the deed.

With all this planning out of the way, we're finally ready to draw the map itself. Before you proceed you might want to re-read the general tips for drawing maps presented in *Dragon Magazine* #262.

Ray Winninger lives about as far away from the wilderness as possible, in suburban Evanston, Illinois, though he does travel a lot.

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Sage Advice

By Skip Williams

This month, the Sage considers questions about optional rules for the AD&D® game and winds up with a long look at (and through) the wall of force *spell.*

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Do the various player character races from the PLANESCAPE® setting receive modifiers to the new thieving abilities introduced in the *Skills & Powers* book?

Here are some suggestions:

Aasimar: Detect Magic +10%; Detect Illusion +10%; Bribe —; Tunneling–5%; Escape Bonds —.

Bariaur: Detect Magic +5%; Detect Illusion +5%; Bribe +5%; Tunneling –5%; Escape Bonds —.

Genasi: Detect Magic +5%; Detect Illusion +5%; Bribe —; Tunneling — Escape Bonds —.

Githzerai: No modifiers.

Tiefling: Detect Magic +5%; Detect Illusion +5%; Bribe –5%; Tunneling —; Escape Bonds +5%

Which changes to a creature does a *true seeing* spell reveal? What would a person using a *true seeing* spell see if looking at the following people:

- **a 60-year-old who was 20 years old before being aged 40 years by a ghost**
- **a 20-year-old who was 30 years old before being rejuvenated 10 years by a potion of *longevity*, or**
- **a pony who is actually a *shapechanged* druid?**

Permanent changes such as aging, ability score loss, alignment shifts, or reincarnation aren't revealed by a *true seeing* spell. So, in your first two examples, *true seeing* reveals nothing special.

Temporary changes in form, or changes based on a continuing magical effect, such as *polymorph, shapechange,* and illusion magic, are always revealed by *true seeing*. So in your last example, *true seeing* reveals a person.

Exactly which changes to a creature will a *true seeing* spell reveal?

When a druid shapechanges, all he or she is wearing, plus one object in each hand, merges into the new form. Does this effect work in reverse? If a druid *shapechanges* into a pony and someone puts a bit and bridle, saddle, saddle blanket, and saddle bags on him, what happens to those items when the druid returns to his normal form?

They fall off. The transformation of items does not work in reverse.

How quickly can the temperature be altered by the spell *control temperature 10' radius*? Are there any game effects for this spell?

The temperature changes instantly.

You can assume that temperatures above 140° Fahrenheit or below 0° Fahrenheit inflict 2d4 points of damage per round. Note that many creatures can easily withstand these extremes; for example, temperatures below 0° do not harm polar bears (or any other type of furry animal), nor do they harm humans wearing heavy clothing.

Does a *ring of fire resistance* protect against the effects of normal heat as well as normal fire?

Yes.

Can you summarize the rules that have been published over the years (I've been playing since 1982) regarding characters who have been *held, paralyzed*, stunned, rendered helpless, motionless, or just fallen asleep? What happens in terms of armed combat, unarmed combat (modifications to the THAC0 rolls, initiative rolls, AC adjustments), and spellcasting (saving throw bonuses/penalties, spellcasting time)?

Table 51 in the *Players' Handbook* gives all the information you need. Use the "Defender Sleeping or Held" line whenever a creature is completely unable to defend itself. Note that "sleeping" in this case means magical sleep. A character who is just normally asleep uses the "Defender Stunned or Prone" line.

Characters who have been rendered inactive for any reason cannot cast

spells. Such characters suffer a –4 penalty to saving throws.

Can an *animal friendship* spell disrupt the effects of a *find familiar* spell or break the bond between a paladin and his or her bonded warhorse? It seems to me that *find familiar* is more powerful due to its binding effects than a simple "friendship."

I recommend that you do not allow *animal friendship* to work on any familiar or bonded mount. Even if you do allow the spell to affect these creatures, it does not disrupt the link between the familiar or mount and its master. At best, the spell makes the familiar or mount friendly toward the *animal friendship* caster. The animal obeys the caster's commands only as long is the animal's master or mistress is not around to countermand them. In no case can *animal friendship* compel a familiar or mount to disobey its master or do any harm to the master. Any attack by the caster against the animal or its master breaks the *animal friendship* spell.

In a game recently, the question arose whether mundane arrows fired from a magical bow can damage creatures harmed only by magical weapons. For example, can a nonmagical arrow fired from a *longbow* +3 hit and damage a pit fiend?

No. See the last line of the *bow +1* description in the DUNGEON MASTER® *Guide*.

The entry in the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ tome for derro says their savants have access to the *paralyzation* spell. However, the term savant is never defined, and I cannot find the *paralyzation* spell in the *Player's Handbook* or the *Tome of Magic*. So, what is a savant, and where can I find the spell?

A savant is a type of derro who can cast spells; see the MONSTROUS MANUAL tome. *Paralyzation* is an illusion spell. It is included in Volume 3 of the *Wizard's Spell Compendium*. If you don't have this book, use *hold person* instead.

Under the AD&D rules, from what spheres can a Knight of Solomnia choose spells?

Kiri-Jolith's spheres. This gives the knight major access to All, Combat, Guardian, Healing, Law, Protection, and War and minor access to Charm, Divination, Sun, Wards, plus the *create food and water* spell.

The player characters in my game were forced to place one of their henchmen into a *prison of Zagyg*, thanks to an unfortunate encounter with a *helm of opposite alignment*. Then the party ran into their archnemesis, who succeeded in casting a *Mordenkainen's disjunction* spell on the party. The *prison of Zagyg* failed its saving throw. What should happen to the character inside? Would the character return to normal size and be extruded through the bars of the prison?

The prisoner is simply released, unharmed, from confinement. Since the cage simultaneously transports a creature inside and shrinks the target to fit, undoing the enchantment places the creature outside the cage again, at normal size.

In spite of hints and outright statements to the contrary scattered through the rules, when magic changes a creature or object's size, the subject stops changing size at the point when any further change would damage itself or something else. If the size-changing magic has sufficient duration, the size change might be only temporarily halted until there is sufficient space to complete it.

Can creatures who are normally invisible see other members of their races? I'm concerned primarily with pixies, sprites, and the like.

Technically, no. Creatures cannot see other invisible creatures unless their descriptions specifically say they have the *detect invisibility* power. I suppose you could institute a house rule that says otherwise, but I recommend against it. Note that it is possible to notice invisible creatures (see the description of the *invisibility* spell) without any magical aid. Also note that many "normally invisible" creatures have the power to become visible and that they might devise all manner of tricks that allow them to track each other visibly. For example, pixies might carry visible objects around with them.

What's the swimming rate of an aquatic trow (from Issue #257). Can a trow use its sense of smell to detect poison in food or drinks?

DEMIHUMAN DEITIES DILEMMAS

The *Demihuman Deities* book says the duergar's spell-like ability to assume giant size is equal their hit points with a limit of level 10, but I can't find anything about that limit in the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ tome. Is this new rule? Does it apply only to the duergar of the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting or just to duergar priests?

The MONSTROUS MANUAL tome says the casting level of duergar spell-like racial abilities equals their hit points. The duergar entry says duergar have 1d8+2 hit points. At the time the MONSTROUS MANUAL tome was written, no one had seriously considered duergar with character classes, so duergar in effect have a casting-level limit of 10 for any spell-like ability.

The ruling given in *Demihuman Deities* is official for all duergar with character classes in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. Prudent DMs will apply it to all duergar.

The *Demihuman Deities* book says elf druids are limited to level 12 and half-elf druids are limited to level 9. Specialty priests of these races are limited to levels 16 and 18, respectively. Okay so far, but what happens with specialty priests who are actually druids (such as the priests of Rillifane Rallathil)? Do they count as druids or specialty priests when it comes to level limits?

In general, if the specialty priest is really another class (such as a druid or ranger), go with the other class's characteristics, including the experience table, saving throws, magical item use, alignment restrictions, level limits, and so on. Be sure to check the specialty priest description for specific exceptions.

COMBAT & TACTICS CONUNDRUMS

Under the *Combat & Tactics* rules, can a character choose a guard action with a whip (with a range of 3)? If so, can the character guard with missile weapons?

It's okay to guard with a ranged attack, but the player must say what area the character is guarding. I suggest an area three squares wide and three squares deep (or four by four). All squares to be guarded must lie within the weapon's range.

The *Combat & Tactics* rules say that when someone charges an opponent who is guarding, the order of attacks depends on who has the greatest reach, but if they both have equal reach the opponent who won initiative attacks first. The same rules also say the opponent with the largest weapon attacks first if both have the same reach. Which is it: size or initiative?

Consider reach first and default to initiative if both have the same reach.

Under the *Combat & Tactics* rules, what happens when two opponents charge each other? Who has the bonuses and penalties for charging? Do both have the modifiers? Or does only the opponent who is moving at the time of contact?

Charges happen on the character's base phase and are resolved in initiative order within the phase. Only a character who is actually moving when contacting the enemy enjoys the charge modifiers. Since all combatants move one at a time, it is not possible for two opponents to charge each other simultaneously.

The *Combat & Tactics* rules say swooping creatures are subject to attacks of opportunity. Say an abishai happened to swoop a fighter with multiple attacks. Can the fighter make all his or her attacks against the abishai? Can the fighter make all these attacks, plus an extra attack of opportunity, as the abishai swoops by? Is there any away the swooping abishai can avoid the fighter's attacks?

The number of attacks the fighter can make against the abishai depends on the order of actions in the round—and on exactly what the abishai does.

Let's pause for a few reminders: Creatures gain one attack during an attack of opportunity. Creatures have their normal attacks during their turns in the order of phases in the round, and any actions that happen in the same phase are resolved in initiative order. A character who attacks multiple times with the same weapon takes the first attack on the base phase or the weapon's phase, whichever is slower. The additional attacks come once per phase afterward.

The fighter in your example can get both attacks against the abishai only if the abishai happens to be in a square the character threatens during both phases in which the character is entitled to attack. Since the abishai is swooping, that's not likely to happen.

The abishai can avoid attacks of opportunity in two ways. The best way is to swoop in and attack the fighter from a square the character does not threaten. The abishai can then deliver its attacks and fly away. If the abishai does not pass through the area the fighter threatens on the way in or on the way out, it does not suffer an attack of opportunity. Note, however, that the fighter can adjust facing once each round—and might turn around to threaten the abishai when it arrives.

The other way the abishai can avoid an attack of opportunity from the fighter is to stop moving after it attacks. Even if the fighter turns to face the abishai, there will be no attack of opportunity because the abishai does not leave the zone the fighter threatens. The next round, the abishai can simply withdraw and leave the threatened zone without an attack of opportunity. If the abishai's base phase comes before the fighter has his or her first attack, the fighter can't do anything about it. If the fighter's attack comes before the abishai's move, the fighter can make the attack, and there's nothing the abishai can do about it.

I suggest a swimming rate of 12, the same as for a merrow. I suppose any creature with an acute sense of smell could detect a poison with a strong scent, provided that scent was stronger than the scent of whatever food or drink it had been added to. DMs would have to decide which poisons were strong enough to be sniffed out on a case-by-case basis.

Say you had six coins, each with a *continual light* cast on it. If you took all six coins into an area affected by a *continual darkness* spell, would all of the *continual light* spells be temporarily negated or just one of them?

Just one of them. What actually happens is that when the areas of effect of the *continual light* spells overlap the area of effect of the *continual darkness* spell, one *continual light* cancels the *darkness* effect and is cancelled itself. This cancellation occurs only in places where both spells are operating. The other five *continual light* effects keep working. If the character carrying the coins moves through the area of *continual darkness* and continues on so that the *continual darkness* area no longer overlaps any *continual light* area, all seven effects work normally again. *Continual light* and *continual darkness* can permanently negate each other, but only when deliberately cast against each other.

There's a huge debate raging on the TSR Internet message boards (some 40 posts in all) over the *wall of force* spell, mostly regarding how *wall of force* affects other spells. How solid is a *wall of force*? Would running into it be like hitting a solid stone wall? If a spell's physical manifestation contacts the *wall of force* (lets say it's *Melf's acid arrow*), does it pass through the wall, or is it stopped? If an area of effect spell's physical manifestation is very large, say a *fireball*, would the blast be large enough to arc over the top and hit creatures standing on the other side? If a spell has no physical manifestation, say *feeblemind*, and it is cast at a target on the other side of the *wall of force*, would the wall stop the spell from affecting the target? If a spell has a physical manifestation, but can start at a point chosen by the caster, not from

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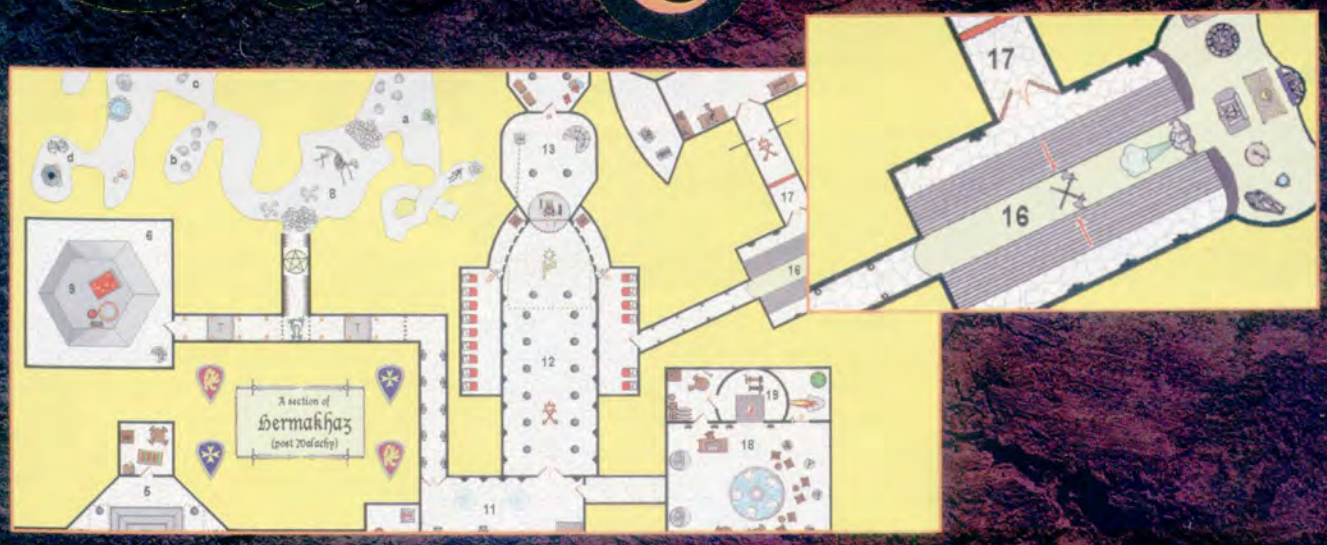

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the caster's own body, say a *lightning bolt*, and the caster attempts to start the physical manifestation on the other side of the *wall of force* so that it would hit a creature standing on that side, would the creature be hit by the spell?

A *wall of force* is an absolutely impregnable and immobile physical barrier that cannot be chipped, cut, or shifted. That makes a pretty good argument for making it unpleasant to run into. On the other hand, it's magical and has no mass to speak of, so perhaps hitting it at a run would just stop the running creature. Individual DMs have considerable wiggle room here.

In the AD&D game, physical barriers stop spells. Not only will a spell's area of effect not extend past a physical barrier, but there must also be an unbroken line between the caster and the spell's target or target point (the point where the area of effect originates). Imagine a string stretched taut between the spellcaster and the target or target point. If any obstacle prevents that string from being absolutely straight, the spell is blocked. Some spells, such as *Melf's acid arrow*, create an effect that begins at the caster and follows a straight path to the target; such effects hit a *wall of force* and go "splat," usually harmlessly. Other effects manifest themselves at the target or target point. These simply fail if a *wall of force* blocks the line between caster and target—the caster cannot circumvent the *wall of force* by choosing a target or target point beyond the wall.

There are certain spells that ignore barriers, such as *clairaudience* and *teleport*; these ignore *walls of force*. There are other effects that simply rely on vision. Gaze attacks, for example. If you see a medusa's face, you might turn to stone, and a barrier between you and a medusa cannot save you if it is transparent, no matter how strong it is. (Note that rays from beholders' or retrievers' eyes are not gaze attacks, and *walls of force* stop them.)

Certain divination effects, such as *true seeing*, also remain unaffected by a *wall of force* because it is transparent. The overwhelming majority of spells and magical effects stop cold when they hit a *wall of force*.

The missile from a *fireball* spell detonates if it strikes a *wall of force*. Note that a *fireball* reshapes itself to fill a constant volume of about 33,000 cubic feet. If the *wall of force* is 25 feet square or larger, or if the *wall of force* has been placed to seal off an area entirely, the whole blast expands back toward the caster. If the *wall of force* is less than 25 feet square and there is space around its edges, the *fireball* seeps though, and the *fireball's* volume will be more or less equally distributed on both sides of the *wall*. Creatures behind the *wall* (that is, on the side opposite the spellcaster) gain saving throw bonuses.

How much space is needed to charge?

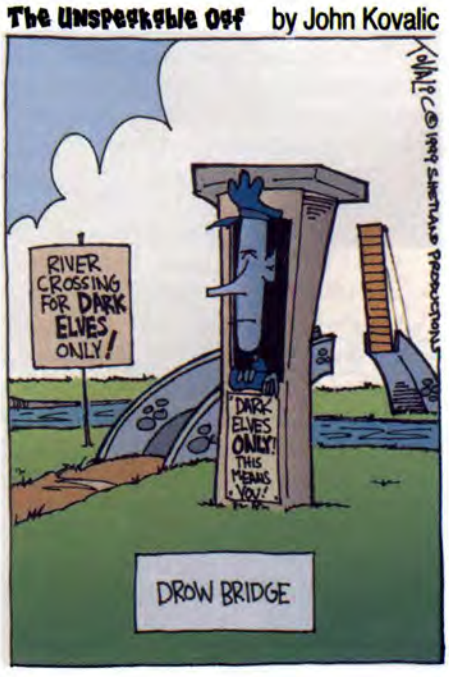
How much space is needed to charge?

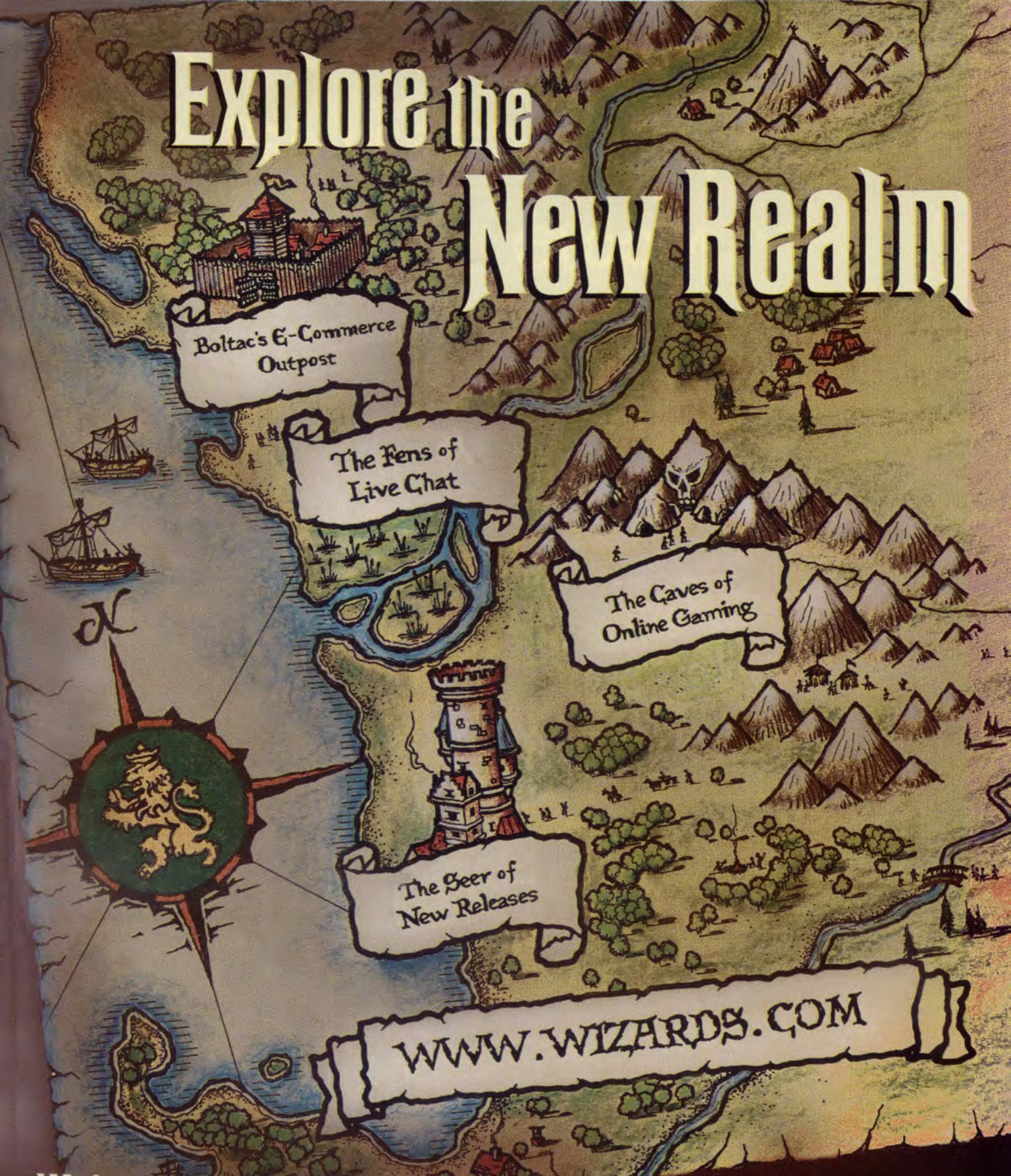
I recommend a minimum distance of 15 feet for a foot charge and 30 feet for a mounted charge.

Suppose a character is using a *+4 defender sword* in all defensive mode (giving a +4 bonus to Armor Class). Can the character use the same sword to hit and damage a creature that can be damaged only by a +1 or better magical weapons?

No. Only the sword's current offensive plus counts. If it's +0, the sword can't affect creatures harmed only by +1 or better magical weapons. This applies to any weapon that has a variable bonus, such as a *sword of dancing* (which has a bonus that slides up and down from round to round) or a *flame-tongue sword* (which has a bonus that depends on the type opponent the *sword* strikes).

Skip Williams once observed that the only thing more unyielding than a wall of force *are the opinions of some people who post messages on the Internet.*





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ProFiles

WOLFGANG BAUR

Feeling paranoid? Well then, **Designer Wolfgang Baur** has the game for you.

by Stephen Kenson

Wolfgang Baur has the kind of patchwork background that makes him eminently suited to working on Wizards of the Coast's new roleplaying game about conspiracy theories and high weirdness.

Born in the Chicago suburbs, Baur attended the University of Illinois, and later Cornell University for graduate studies in biochemistry and molecular biology. "I was looking at an academic career in research," he says. When funding ran out in 1991, he took a temporary job as assistant editor to Barbara Young at *DUNGEON® Adventures*. "By the time my scholarship was reinstated, I didn't want to go back," Baur says. "I'd been writing for *DUNGEON Adventures* and Iron Crown, but this was an opportunity to work in a field I loved."

In his years at TSR, Baur was involved in many projects as either designer or editor. "It didn't seem like much until I started adding it all together," he says. Beyond his work on *DUNGEON Adventures* and *DRAGON® Magazine*, Baur has worked on the PLANESCAPE® (*Planes of Law, Planes of Chaos*), AL-QADIM® (*Secrets of the Lamp, Assassin Mountain*), and BIRTHRIGHT® settings (*Warlock of the Stonecrowns*), "plus a bunch of forgettable modules, 'additional design' credits on a dozen projects, editing the STAR*DRIVE® setting, *Dataware, Doom of Daggerdale*, some work for ICE like *Treasures of Middle-earth*, backstory for the C•23™ TCG, and a (thankfully) rejected design for a truly awful card-based MAGIC: THE GATHERING® RPG."

Baur has also written numerous magazine articles, most recently "Kingdom of the Ghouls" for *DUNGEON Adventures* and "Ecology of the Ghoul" for *DRAGON Magazine*. He says his background in biology often helps lend realism to articles like the "Ecology" series.

The DARK•MATTER™ setting, of course, is Baur's most recent project, a new setting for the ALTERNITY® Science Fiction RPG. Unlike the STAR*DRIVE setting, the first ALTERNITY setting, which is a far-future space-opera campaign setting for the ALTERNITY game, the DARK•MATTER setting is in the very near future, only a few years ahead of us. It is a world of hidden secrets and strange happenings, where nearly every conspiracy theory that ever existed is probably true, although not always in the way people believe.

Baur did considerable research into occult, UFO, and government conspiracy theories in preparation for writing the DARK•MATTER game. "I just had to stop at a certain point. There's an endless well of conspiracy material out there, and it never seems to run dry. I took about a month to do research, and then I looked up individual topics as they came up. Parts of the setting, such as the magic system, were farmed out and developed by other writers. Sean Reynolds is the man mostly responsible for developing that. A lot of people contributed ideas to make the game what it is. I think the skeptics got their digs in, and the believers got their digs in, too."

But after studying and researching conspiracy theories in depth, does Baur think there is anything to them? "After working with the ideas for so long it's hard not to think that, but I'm not as paranoid as some people on the DARK•MATTER project," he says with a laugh. "I believe that most conspiracy theories are amusing but untrue, but there's just so many of them out there you tend to think something must be going on. There's always that chance."

As for his own future, Baur says, "I'm going to continue to do ALTERNITY work. I'm waiting to see how DARK•MATTER turns out in its final incarnation."

Baur is looking forward to working on future DARK•MATTER projects including, possibly, some fiction.

"I'm part of a writers circle called the One Thousand Monkeys. We keep banging away on our keyboards figuring we'll come up with something worthwhile sooner or later!" Although he hopes to write DARK•MATTER fiction, Baur plans to take his time on it. "I don't produce fiction in anywhere near the volume I produce game material."

"For me, writing DARK•MATTER has been a series of maddening missteps, fortunate rescues, and accidental strokes of genius, not to mention plots and counterplots," Baur says. "Like most conspiracies, actually. I think that's the fun of the DARK•MATTER setting. I ran it constantly during its development to see what people liked about it, and that was it: Anything is possible."

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COUNTDOWN

The BIG Announcement

DUNGEON® Adventures *editor Chris Perkins was among the lucky ones to see the Big Announcement in person. Squeezing into the crowded Plankinton Theater in Milwaukee, he studiously took notes and has this report to share:*

The big announcement of this past GEN CON® Game Fair was the impending release of the 3rd Edition of the D&D® game, beginning with the full-color *Player's Handbook* in August 2000 (retail price $19.95 US).

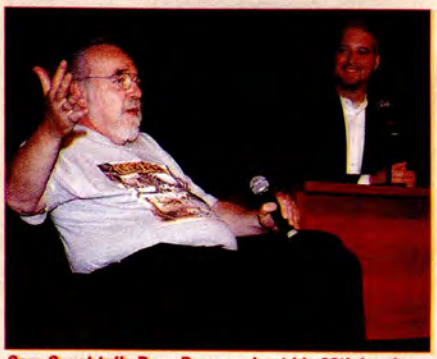
How many gamers does it take to fill a convention hall? Over 20,000 at last count.

Kicking off the event were two special interviews with Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, the creators of the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. Both game veterans spoke briefly of their own D&D game experiences and voiced enthusiasm for the new 3rd Edition. Dave Arneson also reported on his visit to the set of the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS movie shooting in Prague, Czechoslovakia and mentioned a possible cameo in the forthcoming film.

After welcoming Gary and Dave back into the family, Wizards of the Coast Vice-President of Roleplaying Games Ryan Dancey introduced the members of the 3rd Edition design team: Bill Slavicsek (Director of Roleplaying Games R&D), Monte Cook (Designer) Jonathan Tweet (lead Designer), Rich Baker (Designer & Consultant) Skip Williams (Designer), and Kim Mohan (Lead Editor). Joining the team on stage was Peter Adkison, Wizards of the Coast CEO, 3rd Edition visionary, and role-playing game aficionado. Introduced by Category Manager Keith Strohm as one "whose passion for the D&D game knows no bounds," Peter expressed his confidence in the 3rd Edition design team and his excitement about the new edition before turning over the floor to Bill and his team.

The design team alluded to several of the changes and "cool stuff" planned for the new edition. The level limits on demihuman characters have been removed, and a critical hit system has been added. In the new system, high rolls are always good.

Dave Arneson estimates the length of film containing his cameo in the D&D® movie.



Gary Gygat tells Ryan Dancey about his 20th level paladin/assasin.

The Dungeon Delve

Roleplaying game editor and designer Thomas Reid has this report on our favorite Game Fair event. Trust us! You don't want to miss out on this colossal dungeon crawl designed and run by the Game Wizards.

The Dungeon Delve was in full swing again this year drawing hordes of participants through-out the weekend. The event's premise consisted of a local adventuring guild hiring heroes to explore a large dungeon that had, until recently, been magically sealed. As a reward, the heroes were welcome to keep what treasure they could unearth, as long as they reported their findings upon returning to the surface.

The Delve consisted of a large, interactive labyrinth with multiple entrances that was displayed bit by bit as a large-scale, full-color map. Red push pins indicated fallen heroes, whose bodies were discovered and looted by later adventuring parties. As the weekend progressed and the valiant heroes revealed more of the dungeon, the body count mounted, much to the delight of participants and bystanders alike.

By Sunday, groups of valiant explorers fought their way to a final central chamber, prepared to confront the evil lord of the Delve and his minions. The final battle was a magnificent affair that went down to the wire. When it was finally over, a ragged cheer arose in the great castle in the dealer's hall. Plans are in the works to post the Dungeon Delve, in its entirety, at our Web site: **www.wizards.com.**

– Thomas Reid

TO THIRD EDITION

11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Over 2,500 men and 3 women rushed to hear the big announcement (And no, we're not talking about the Pokemon movie.)

Monte Cook raised the issue of "sacred cows," things that cannot be changed without making the D&D game into something completely different. Characters still have six ability scores (the same six as in 2nd Edition), and the game still uses classes and levels.

Following the introduction of the 3rd Edition designers, Ryan Dancey introduced Senior Art Director Jon Schindehette, who previewed concept sketches for the new 3rd Edition game. Jon and his team of artists, among them Todd Lockwood and Sam Wood, have created model characters based on the 3rd Edition character classes. Audience members were treated to a premiere viewing of the monk, barbarian, and sorcerer classes, among others familiar to 2nd Edition players. Attendees also got to see several of the new monsters, including a nasty, tentacled thing called the dropper, which Ryan Dancey gleefully described as "not your father's piercer!"

The creators of 3rd Edition wait patiently for donuts. From left to right: Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Kim Mohan.

It was also officially announced that Wizards of the Coast is working closely with two of the top video game companies to create games designed with the 3rd Edition D&D rules. SSI is working on *Pools of Radiance II: The Ruins of Myth Drannor*, and attendees caught a first glimpse of the game's stunning new graphics. Designers from Black Isle Studios (a division of Interplay) also showed the audience scenes from their amazing new game, *Neverwinter Nights*. The Black Isle Studios designers, who are avid D&D fans, have been playtesting the new rules for the past year and expressed their enthusiasm for 3rd Edition. Both *Pools of Radiance II* and *Neverwinter Nights* are scheduled for release in 2000.

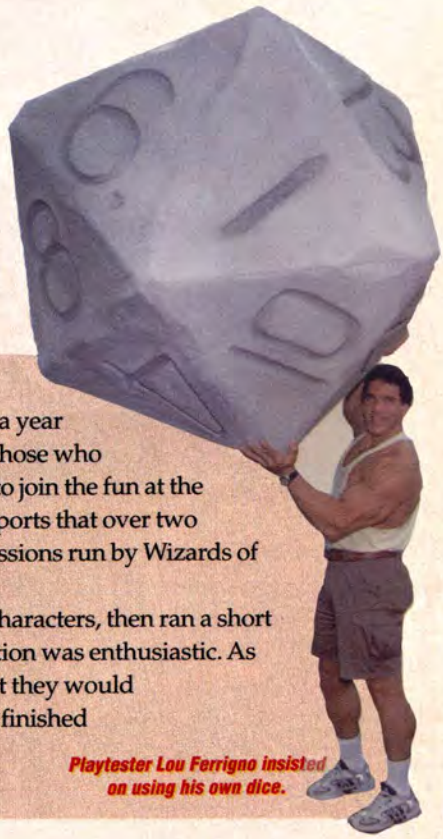
To close the show, Ryan Dancey unveiled still pictures taken on the set of the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS movie being filmed in Czechoslovakia. Many of the locations appearing in the movie have never been filmed before, including a genuine castle and a 14th-century chapel made of human skeletons. The presentation also included glimpses of the cast and crew.

All attendees received a special 3rd Edition T-shirt with a cool "What's New About 3rd Edition" checklist printed on the back, providing even more hints about the new game. At the conclusion of the show, the audience was invited to stay current on official 3rd Edition announcements by regularly checking out the 3rd Edition Website at **www.3rdedition.com** and, of course, reading *DRAGON® Magazine*.

Playtesting at the Game Fair

While over 1,000 playtesters had already spent a year knocking the bugs out of the new D&D game, those who attended the Big Announcement had a chance to join the fun at the Game Fair. Playtest coordinator Kim Mohan reports that over two hundred lucky gamers tried the new rules at sessions run by Wizards of the Coast employees and veteran playtesters.

The DMs helped the new playtesters create characters, then ran a short adventure showcasing the new rules . The reaction was enthusiastic. As Kim points out, "the biggest complaint was that they would have to wait for a year to get their hands on the finished *Player's Handbook!*"



Playtester Lou Ferrigno insisted on using his own dice.

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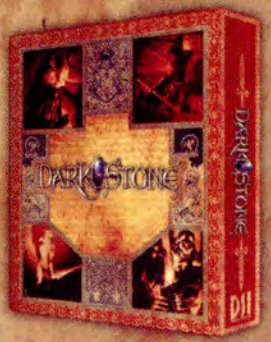

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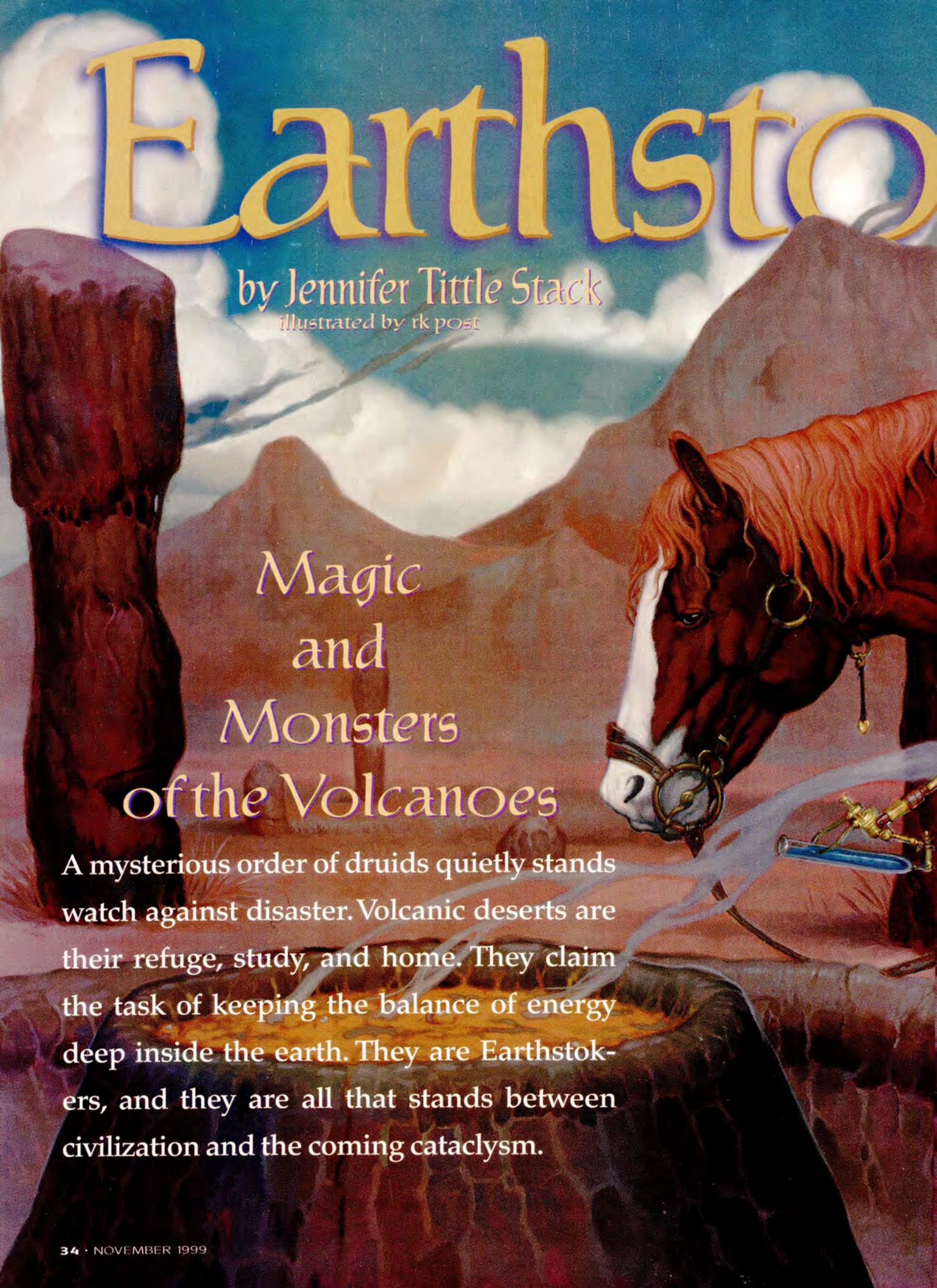
Earthsto

by Jennifer Tittle Stack

illustrated by rk post



Magic and Monsters of the Volcanoes

A mysterious order of druids quietly stands watch against disaster. Volcanic deserts are their refuge, study, and home. They claim the task of keeping the balance of energy deep inside the earth. They are Earthstokers, and they are all that stands between civilization and the coming cataclysm.

kers

Earthstokers are the wardens of the earth's greatest power. They can call upon the might of volcanoes, but this power demands wisdom and responsibility. Earthstokers have set themselves a great task: to maintain the balance of seismic energy under the earth's surface. Their foes are those undisciplined wizards who unleash uncontrollable seizmic energies with their spells. The name "earthstoker" comes from their belief that they must kindle the earth's seismic forces to prevent dangerous mounting of energy. Earthstokers are united in their belief that, should they fail in their task, the entire planet will be torn apart by seismic energy.

New Proficiency: Geonosy

This proficiency gives the earthstoker a better chance to recognize signs of volcanic activity and to survive its effects. PCs with this proficiency gain a +1 bonus per proficiency slot (up to +4 maximum) to saving throws vs. earth- and fire-based magic and suffer –1 point of damage per slot (up to –6 maximum) from any source of volcanic activity. Proficient geonists learn ways of coping with dangerous volcanic conditions, such as tying wet scarves around their faces. Characters with Geonosy can predict the number of SFPs (seismic force points) in an area with an error margin of 1d100 SFPs and can distinguish volcanic rocks from sedimentary ones.

Society: Most earthstokers are druids, but their ranks include specialty priests whose patron deities include nature, mountains, and the elements in their portfolios. Most earthstokers, known as watchers, spend their lives studying a particular volcanic region. A minority, called wanderers, roam the earth searching for new seismic phenomenon and tracking rogue wizards and other magical disturbances.

A future earthstoker must serve a rigorous, often isolated apprenticeship filled with tests intended to challenge the apprentice's strength, both physical and moral. Masters often send their students into wild regions, forbidding them to return until they have mastered their developing magical powers.

Role: The earthstokers' primary goal is to preserve the balance of seismic force. All else is secondary. Because of this view, earthstokers are sometimes viewed as reclusive, remote, or even evil. Ironically, it is usually their love of life that draws earthstokers to their task.

The earthstokers' first duty is to detect pent-up energy within the earth and release it before it builds to devastating levels. These releases cause minor seismic events. (See the Consequences of Volcano Magic sidebar.) The measurement for seismic energy is known as a *Seismic Force Point* (SFP). When enough points accumulate in a given region, they burst in a seismic event of unpredictable force and duration. Earthstokers minimize these events by triggering or dissipating SFPs through spells. Many spells release SFPs, and a few spells deplete them (denoted by negative numbers). When an earthstoker casts a spell that depletes SFPs, there must be enough points accumulated in a region for the spell to function. Thus, the DM who includes more than one earthstoker in the campaign should consider creating a simple SFP map and keeping track of the changes in the SFP level from area to area.

Requirements: Earthstokers are neutral. The exceptions are specialty priests, who may be lawful neutral, chaotic neutral, neutral good, or neutral evil. With each level gained as an earthstoker, a specialty priest has a 20% cumulative chance of shifting his or her alignment to true neutral.

Earthstokers can be of any race. An earthstoker needs a Wisdom score of 14 or above to understand the relationships between seismic energy and the earth, and a Constitution score of 14 or above to survive the effects of volcano magic.

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, Staff, Spear, Javelin, any Pole-arm.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Geonosy. *Required:* Local History (for watchers), Direction Sense (for wanderers), Mountaineering. *Recommended:* Firebuilding, Ancient History, Weather Sense, Healing, Animal Lore, Endurance, Survival.

Equipment: Earthstokers wear a form of tough, treated leather armor that covers most of their bodies (AC 7, –2 to AC vs. heat-based attacks), and their faces are usually veiled with light cotton. They know that volcanic gases, hot enough to burn skin, often flow too fast to ignite leather or fabric. Earthstokers are not interested in personal possessions or wealth, except for unusual metals and implements they invent to help them in their work.

Special Benefits: Earthstokers gain a +2 bonus to saving throws against any elemental attacks on the Prime Material Plane as well as the Inner Planes. Earthstokers can access powerful spells, including some normally reserved for wizards. Listed below are special spell enhancements and variations that earthstokers learn as they advance in level. These are not bonus spells; earthstokers earn bonus spells as do druids or priests. SFPs affected are noted.

At 1st level, earthstokers casting *endure heat/cold* are protected in temperatures up to 600°F and as low as –200°F.

Also at 1st level, earthstokers can detect seismic energy. Range, duration, and other aspects of this ability are similar to the *detect magic* spell, except that the depth of the area of effect extends to the center of the earth. A strong force from deep beneath the ground might be confused with a weak force closer to the surface. The caster has a 20% chance to accurately detect whether the energy detected poses an immediate danger. This percentage rises by five percentage points per level of the caster, up to 95%.

At 4th level, earthstokers who cast *reflecting pool* can view conditions on top of a nearby volcano. This apprises the earthstoker of any possible volcanic activity and allows him or her to cast certain spells (as noted in the spell description) through the pool.

At 5th level, earthstokers casting the *protection from fire* spell can harness SFPs to absorb up to 24 points of heat or fire damage per level of the caster (rather than the usual 12 per level) before the spell is negated. **SFP:** –25.

At 7th level, earthstokers can use *wall of force* to alter flows of lava. When doing so, the range and duration of this spell are doubled. **SFP:** 200.

Earthstokers of 9th level or greater can cast *meteor storm* once per day against those who threaten the seismic balance. Earthstokers know through their studies

that, in ancient times, cataclysmic meteorite impacts created hotspots in the earth. **SFP:** 800.

Special Hindrances: Earthstokers face a host of dangers as they carry out their work in inhospitable conditions. They cast spells only for important reasons. Unless under direct attack, they must try to determine the amount of seismic energy in a region before using any magical powers (other than divinatory abilities). They are not permitted to cast spells that release more than 400 SFPs in a given region unless exposed to a specific emergency. Their most powerful spells require long casting periods. For everyday problems, they call upon the nonweapon proficiencies they learned during their long apprenticeships.

Earthstokers also face social problems and dangers posed by people who mistrust them. Because their activities are so shrouded in mystery, most people do not understand their beneficial role. Because earthstokers must sometimes add SFPs to regions where they are depleted, superstitious people often attribute every natural disaster to the presence of earthstokers.

Major Spheres: Volcano Magic (see below), Elemental, Evocation

Minor Spheres: Combat, Divination, Numbers

Prohibited Spheres: Charm, Illusion, Necromantic

NEW SPELLS

The earthstoker's most powerful tool is volcano magic. Volcano magic "pulls" energy from the elements and channels it directly into spell effects. This magic is related to both the Elemental sphere and the school of Evocation. The forces that activate this magic come from both seismic energy and the earthstoker's connection with nature.

Earthstokers guard these spells zealously. They fear that undisciplined spellcasters might gain control over their magic with devastating consequences. If the earthstokers feel that a spellcaster knows enough about these spells, they offer the outsider the chance to join their ranks. Spellcasters who refuse this offer or who fail the rigorous test of apprenticeship are hunted as dangerous rogues by all earthstokers, who consider them the most dangerous prey.

Forewarning

Level: 2
Sphere: Elemental/Divination
Range: 1 square mile
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 10 square miles
Saving Throw: None
SFP: 1

This spell enables the caster to predict a coming volcanic eruption or earthquake within 1d6 days of its occurrence. The caster can also accurately predict the epicenter of the event within 100 square yards. The spell is usually cast by meditating, but if an earthstoker is in an area where the event will occur, the knowledge might simply come. The caster can predict only those events occurring within the area of effect—and only natural events, not those created by magic.

The material components are two lodestones that must be thrown together like dice; they are not consumed in the casting of the spell.

Renew Earth

Level: 3
Sphere: Elemental/Creation
Range: 1 square mile
Components: V, S, M
Duration: One year
Casting Time: 8
Area of Effect: 10 square yards/level of caster (see below)
Saving Throw: None
SFP: –10/square yard

When cast in a region devastated by a volcanic eruption, this spell speeds the renewal of plant life by a factor of four. It can also be cast over any area of land to speed normal patterns of growth by the same factor. The spell works by drawing plant and animal life into the affected region. Normally, an area devastated by volcanic activity must depend on vagaries of wind and animal migration to reseed itself with plant life. *Renew earth* activates minerals in the soil to attract animals and plant life immediately. A barren region produces small hardy plants within a few weeks and tree seedlings within a year.

The spell depletes SFPs because it harnesses seismic energy to renew the soil. Because seismic events often enrich soil by leaving mineral deposits, the spell's area of effect is doubled if it is cast within 10 days of such an event.

The material components for this spell are a pinch of volcanic dust and a small piece of fireweed, a plant that thrives in volcanic soil. Both components are consumed in the casting.

Seismic Trigger

Level: 4
Sphere: Elemental/Numbers
Range: 1 square mile
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 square mile
Saving Throw: None
SFP: See below

Earthstokers use this spell to release pent-up seismic force points in small doses in a given area, preventing SFPs from reaching a critical level. To determine the number of SFPs released, roll 3d100. To determine what seismic events are triggered by the casting of this spell, consult the consequences of Volcano Magic sidebar. The force released by a single casting of this spell triggers mudpots, splattercones, solfatara, and sulfurous fumes. (See the Consequences of Volcano Magic sidebar.) Multiple castings of *seismic trigger* on a single area are cumulative, so several careless earthstokers could trigger more dangerous effects.

The number of SFPs returns to normal at a gradual rate of 10 SFPs per day.

The material components for this spell are two lodestones shaken inside a tinder box; these components are not consumed in the casting.

Countering Volcano Magic

Because Volcano spells use magic to set natural events in motion, anti-magic spells and effects function against them only during casting. After the spell is cast, it is no longer vulnerable to *dispel magic* and similar spells. This condition applies only to specific Volcano magic spells, not Elemental spells in general. Events triggered by the release of seismic force points are never vulnerable to anti-magic spells and effects.

SFP Values of Existing Spells

Certain spells affect SFPs in the area in which they are cast. The list below includes those known to earthstokers, but DMs are encouraged to add to the list as they introduce new spells to the campaign. When one of these spells disrupts the seismic balance, earthstokers are quick to investigate the source.

Wizard Spells

Anti-magic shell	–50
Burning hands	5
Chaos	75
Conjure elemental	100
Dancing lights	5
Dig	5
Disintegrate	–100
Fireball	25
Flaming sphere	25
Forcecage	50
Incendiary cloud	200
Move earth	75
Otiluke's resilient sphere	–35
Prismatic sphere	–200
Prismatic wall	–150
Repulsion	–40
Reverse gravity	500
Sink	100
Stone shape	35
Wall of fire (or *ice, force, iron,* or *stone)*	150

Priest Spells

Animate rock	100
Chariot of Sustarre	200
Earthquake	250
Fire storm	150
Flame strike	75
Transmute rock to mud	100

Lava Tunnel

Level: 5
Sphere: Elemental
Range: 1,000 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1d6 days/level
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: 100 yards/level
Saving Throw: None
SFP: 25/level

This spell creates a channel of lava by pulling seismic energy from deep underground. The surface solidifies and forms a tube that insulates the lava below so it can travel without losing much heat. The caster can determine where the tube starts and the direction in which it travels. One cubic foot of lava per round for a number of rounds equal to the caster's level flows out of the tube. (See The Nature of Lava sidebar for game effects.) If the lava flow is blocked, the tube could burst, causing hot lava to splatter within 100 yards of the tube. Earthstokers use this spell to divert flows of lava from an erupting volcano, either as an offensive weapon or else to protect dangerous or sacred territory by ringing it with solidified lava.

The material components are a glass tube and a piece of quartz, both of which are burned in a hot fire and consumed.

Fire on the Mountain

Level: 6
Sphere: Elemental
Range: 200 yards + 25 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: 30' radius/level
Saving Throw: None (½ for individual bolts)
SFP: 50 + 25/level of caster

This spell draws seismic energy into the atmosphere to create an electrically charged cloud above a mountaintop or tall building. Mimicking one of the early warning signs of a volcanic eruption, the black cloud produces 1–8 *lightning bolts* (as per the 3rd-level wizard spell). The caster can direct one *bolt* per round at any target, as per the spell. *Bolts* cause 3d6 points of damage to one target each, with a saving throw for half damage. Every round that the spell is active, there is a 25% chance that the cloud emits 1d6 *lightning balls* that roll down to the ground and move randomly at a Movement Rate of 12 for 1d4 rounds each. The *lightning balls* are eerie blue sizzling masses of light 2–8" in diameter. Creatures touching ball lightning directly must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic at a +2 bonus or suffer 6d8 points of electrical damage and be stunned for 2d6 rounds. The cloud is extremely hazardous to aerial creatures. Any flying creatures in the area of effect (other than elemental-type creatures) must make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation or fall out of the sky. Visibility inside the cloud is practically zero.

There is no rain associated with this spell, but unusually loud thunder may result. Strong winds disperse the cloud, causing the duration of the spell to be reduced by half. Other than altering the winds, *weather control* does not affect this spell, since the cloud and lightning are produced by seismic energy instead of normal weather patterns.

The material components for this spell are flint and tinder, which are struck against a glass bottle filled with volcanic gas. All of the components are consumed in the casting.

Break the Streets

Level: 7
Sphere: Elemental/Combat
Range: See below
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 5 turns/level
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: 5 square yards + 50 square yards/level
Saving Throw: None
SFP: 200

This spell draws on seismic energy and the elemental power of ice to create a small area of intense cold. This 5-square-yards area is ground zero for a cryovolcanic eruption, an explosion of ice and volatile elements. The spell concentrates these elements (see the Nature of Lava sidebar) and forces them through a field of seismic energy. The result is devastating to cities, towns with brick or stone buildings, or areas under construction. Intense cold, combined with exploding ice and gases, cracks paved surfaces, and sends buildings toppling. Stone constructs must roll a saving throw of 14 or better to survive intact. (See Siege Damage rules in the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*.) Earth and wood constructs are not affected. Anyone within the 5-yards field must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or suffer 2d12 points of damage.

Anyone in the wider area of effect (50 square yards per caster level) has a 30% chance per round of injury from falling rock and debris (2d4 points of damage), and a 40% chance per round of contacting ice lava. Resulting damage is 1d4 points of damage per round from contact. Anyone wearing metal armor suffers double damage, but wearing leather or thick wool reduces the damage by half. Immersion of any bare skin is

incredibly dangerous: There is a 10% chance of losing the limb to frostbite if the victim doesn't receive the appropriate treatment or the protection of magical warmth. Full immersion requires a successful System Shock roll; failure indicates that the victim is rendered unconscious for 2 full turns after being removed from the ice lava. The material components are the caster's holy symbol and a paving stone, which the earthstoker flings to the ground.

Pyroclastic Surge

Level: 7
Sphere: Elemental
Range: 1,000 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2–3 rounds
Casting Time: 9
Area of Effect: 150' radius/level (or wall 3,000 × 1,000 yards, see below)
Saving Throw: Special
SFP: 300+1d20/level of caster

This spell creates a pyroclastic surge: an incandescent, ground-hugging cloud of hot dust and pumice that races along the earth's surface at MV 36. Anyone in its path must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or perish. Even those who save successfully suffer 1d8 points of damage per round of exposure. Inside the area of effect, visibility is zero, and the heat is consuming. Anyone who survives the flow must make a successful saving throw vs. poison at a –4 penalty or be rendered unconscious until

Don't be caught aloft when *there's fire on the mountain!*

The Nature of Lava

Terrestrial lava is melted rock forced from the earth by pressure and volatile gases. The most familiar form of lava is usually composed of silica and basalt with other alloys. These alloys might come from deep inside the earth and contain metals foreign to the surface area; thus they are known as xenoliths (foreign rock). In an AD&D® campaign, xenoliths could include adamantite and mithral or new alloys with strange or magical properties. Since the nature of lava from a particular eruption is determined by the type of rock ejected, any of the effects below can be tailored to a particular fantasy environment.

Game Effects

Molten lava can reach 1,380–2,000° F. These temperatures are well within the melting points of most metals. Exceptions to this rule are fantasy alloys such as adamantite and mithral. (See Richard W. Emerich's "Fire for Effect" in *DRAGON® Magazine* #123.) Cold lava is also possible. Cryovolcanic eruptions occur when extremely cold substances (such as nitrogen ice) combine with volatile gases and explode. Naturally, these eruptions occur in very cold places, but they also could be duplicated through magic. (See *break the streets* in New Spells for details.)

Movement: Terrestrial lava flows at two basic speeds: Highly fluid lava flows at MV 24, while thicker, "pancake" lava flows at MV 12. Streams of water poured on the lava reduce its speed by 1d20%, and cold-based magic reduces the speed by half.

Damage: Anyone touching lava suffers 2d4 points of damage per round. If any part of the body is immersed in lava, the victim suffers an additional 2d4 points of damage and must make a successful saving throw vs. spell (each round) or else lose the immersed part. A PC completely immersed must make a successful saving throw vs. magical fire each round or perish.

Special Effects: Within 5 feet of lava, all combustible items ignite, and all exposed flammable items, including magical items, must make a successful saving throw vs. magical fire or else be destroyed.

1d4 rounds after the surge ends. (Non-oxygen breathers are spared this effect.)

The surge can knock buildings flat and strip land bare. Virtually nothing is left behind but thick layers of ash. (See the structural damage table, below.) Sometimes metal objects can be found in the ruins if temperatures within the surge were not too high (50% chance for each metal object affected). Earthen or mud constructs simply liquefy. Occasionally cloth is left untouched, the hot gases having moved too fast to burn it.

About 25% of pyroclastic surges are gravity-driven pyroclastic flows, where the densest part of the flow hugs the ground and is topped by a dark cloud of fine particles that form a wall. These masses of hot gas and incandescent solid particles are violet-gray and filled with electrical scintillations. Saving throws against these surges are made at a –4 penalty. A *reverse gravity* spell causes these flows to move in the opposite direction.

The caster can cause the flow to move in any direction initially, but there is a 5% chance per round that it changes direction randomly. The caster is vulnerable to the effects of this spell but makes saving throws against it at a +2 bonus. Creatures composed of air suffer only 1d2 points of damage per round of exposure. Protective spells like *stoneskin* still leave the recipient vulnerable to heat damage. These individuals suffer 1d4 points of damage per round.

The material components are a pinch of volcanic ash, an ounce of ground mica and a lodestone, shaken together in a metal container. All of the components are consumed in the casting.

Red Skies Warning

(Quest Spell)
Sphere: Elemental/Divination
Range: 10 square miles
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 year
Casting Time: 8
Area of Effect: 100 square miles/level
Saving Throw: None
SFP: 200

Earthstokers use this spell to communicate throughout the world. The image implied by the spell's name is but one of the spell's many different manifestations. Material components are colored grains of sand, a lodestone, and a tear from the caster. The DM should feel free to invent effects other than those described below.

Red skies warning: This effect imbues sunsets with spectacular color. The air smells of ozone at night, and storms rage across the sky. This effect is strongest near the caster and warns all earthstokers of a great event.

Golden bow: After sunset, this effect appears as a golden arc in the sky. This is a great sign for earthstokers; they believe it means that the powers of earth are pleased. The effect guarantees bountiful harvests, and all earthstokers within the area of effect receive an additional +1 to saving throws for the duration of the spell. This benefit is not cumulative with multiple castings of the spell.

Dry fog: This fog, which appears as an acidic blue haze, is not dispersed by wind or rain. It causes current temperatures to persist twice as long as normal. For example, cold air lingers and prevents snow from melting, or humidity is trapped in dense fog, making hot days even hotter and more humid. Crop failures and livestock deaths are prevalent. *Weather summoning* can be used against the fog, halving its duration and area of effect.

Structural Damage Saving Throws

Metal	8
Hard Stone	12
Soft Stone	14
Earth	20
Thin Wood	18
Thick Wood	16
Cloth	12

Use this chart with the Siege Damage rules in the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*.

Children of Fire and Earth: Monsters of the Volcano

There are places in the world where humankind never dared to settle, and other places where they dared but were driven back. These wastelands of glass and wind, lava plains and magma chambers, are home to creatures who are part animal and part energy. Some were born of a volcanic eruption, and others were spawned by the resulting destruction. They require large spaces to live, and their harsh environment admits few

Consequences of Volcano Magic

Those employing volcano magic tap into the seismic forces of the earth. Certain spells draw seismic energy closer to the surface, sometimes causing a volcanic eruption, earthquake, or other seismic event.

The following point system represents the danger of volcano magic. The points given for each spell indicate the amount of seismic energy that has shifted from deep in the planet's interior to a location nearer the surface. Negative points express the amount of such energy dissipated.

The expenditure of enough points in a 5-square-miles area triggers an event. For a 10-square-miles area, double the number of points needed to trigger an event. A thumbnail sketch of each event is provided below. These descriptions are rudimentary (particularly for powerful events), and the DM should tailor each event to the circumstances.

Seismic Events

Volcanic Explosion **1,000**
This event is the most catastrophic form of eruption. An explosion has the power to re-shape landscapes, even to create new continents and other land masses. Eruptions are feared for the devastation they inflict, especially loss of life, which can number in the tens of thousands or more. Every creature within 1d6 square miles of this event must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or else perish.

Fissure Eruption **900**
This form of eruption sends great quantities of fluid lava spilling from deep fissures in the earth. Anyone within 100 yards of the fissure must make a saving throw vs. death magic or perish. Anyone within 2 square miles must make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation at a +2 bonus or suffer 1d10 points of damage.

Volcanic eruption or new volcano formation **800**
This eruption is a slower-moving yet inexorable event. Lava pours out of a mountaintop or a vent in the earth or sea. The lava's progression is slow enough for people and animals to escape, but buildings are buried under the inevitable flow. Few people are killed in these events. (There is a 25% chance that anyone within 2 square miles suffers 1d10 points of damage; on a roll of 01, the character must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or perish.)

Earthquake Swarm **500**
This event is a combination of 1d8 earthquakes. Refer to the *earthquake* spell in the *Player's Handbook*.

Earthquake **100**
Refer to the *earthquake* spell in the *Player's Handbook*.

Fumarole **60**
A hole forms in the earth's surface through which hot water, steam, and hot gases escape onto the surface. All within 5 square feet of the fumarole suffer 1d10 points of damage from steam burns. They must also make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation or be knocked unconscious by the gas for 2 rounds.

Geyser **50**
A geyser is an erupting jet of water that escapes from a hole in the earth's surface. Anyone within 10 feet of the geyser must make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation or suffer 1d10 points of damage from steam.

Sulfurous Fumes **40**
These fumes spread out to cover 1d20 square yards for 2d4 rounds Any creatures in the affected area must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or suffer 1d8 points of damage each round.

Thermal Disruption **25**
Examples of this effect include wells drying, cool springs becoming hot, and hot springs boiling.

Solfatara **15**
This volcanic vent releases sulfurous gases. Anyone within 3 square feet must make a successful Constitution check or faint (to revive in 1 turn).

Splatter Cone **5**
This 2d8'-tall event sprays hot mud on anyone within 1d4 square feet, causing 1d4 points of damage.

Mudpot **2**
This 1 square foot area of hot mud causes 1d4 points of damage to anyone stepping directly in it.

other residents. Often their only neighbors are denizens of the Inner Planes, where these creatures also sometimes travel. Sages collect stories from the few wanderers who encountered these beings and returned alive to describe them. Most information is known only through story and legend.

These children of volcanoes feed on, among other things, seismic energy. They can sense this energy and are drawn to it, even if it lies deep beneath the earth. If they draw too deeply, their feeding sparks earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

An ancient legend tells of a king who wanted a beljuril dragon for a pet. The curious creature was restless and agreed to go into "the shallowlands," as the beljurils say, an area of low seismic energy. After a time the dragon felt a deep hunger that could not be sated. He found the energy he needed so far beneath the earth that when he drew it to himself, the earth buckled and the kingdom was swallowed up.

If these creatures stray too far or too long from the centers of earth's power where they dwell, their strength fades, and they eventually die. This need for energy protects the weaker races from the calamity these monsters could wreak on the civilized world.

Jennifer Tittle Stack is personally responsible for preventing any devastating seismological event in the Ohio region over the past two decades. This article was inspired by her Dad's love of science and ancient history. She has a particularly nice job these days: raising Alexandra, an active 10-month old whose temperament is not at all volcanic.

Beljuril Dragon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Volcanically active regions
FREQUENCY	Very rare
ORGANIZATION	Solitary or clan
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Any
DIET	Special
INTELLIGENCE	Genius (17–18)
TREASURE	Special
ALIGNMENT	Chaotic neutral
NO. APPEARING	1–4
ARMOR CLASS	Variable
MOVEMENT	12, fly 30 (C), swim 18
HIT DICE	Variable (12 base)
THAC0	Variable
NO. OF ATTACKS	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK	Variable
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Breath weapon, spells
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Immune to fire and heat
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Variable
SIZE	Variable
MORALE	Fanatic (17–18)
XP VALUE	Variable

The beljuril dragon is a remnant from a time when oceans of magma lapped against the shores of young continents. A hatchling is dark gray but slowly develops the coloration of a lava lake: gray or black plates interspersed with bright red and yellow outlines. An older dragon gradually loses this pattern of colors and develops dark gray and violet scales streaked with incandescent blue and green.

Beljuril dragons speak their own language and that of one type of creature living nearby. (Usually they have few neighbors.) Adults are 50% likely to speak the language common to all gem dragons. Hatchling beljurils have a 5% chance of being able to communicate with any intelligent creature. This chance increases by 5% per age category.

Combat: Since they live in such isolated places, young beljuril dragons are curious about creatures that they have never seen before. They rarely initiate combat, and their harsh environment usually protects them from any threats. One of the only times older dragons seek conflict is when seeking a new home in seismically active territory. Beljuril dragons are immune to heat-based attacks.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: Beljuril dragons have two breath weapons. One is a burst of energy, which discharges as a beautiful green, violet, or blue lozenge with sparkles of flashing light. The blast absorbs heat, light, and vibratory energy at random and releases 25 SFPs. The charge is silent, cold, and generates a powerful electrical discharge. The blast sometimes (10% chance) produces 1d6 fist-sized beljuril gems worth 5,000 gp, base value. The dragons can use this weapon only in a seismically active environment. Their other breath weapon is a gout of magma. (Occasionally, this magma is of an unusual quality, with game effects different from that given for lava). Like other gem dragons, beljurils have psionic ability.

Psionics Summary:

Level	Dis/Sci/Dev	Attack/Defense	Score	PSPs
= HD	2/2/3	PsC/TW	= INT	200

Common Powers

Psychokinesis—Sciences: *Molecular rearrangement, telekinesis.* Devotions: *Control flames, control wind, inertial barrier, molecular agitation, molecular manipulation.*

Psychometabolism—Sciences: *Energy containment, metamorphosis.* Devotions: *Cell adjustment, chemical stimulation, lend health, suspend animation.*

Habitat/Society: The beljuril dragon inhabits lava lakes formed at the summit of a volcano by an eruption. This is an awesome environment where curtains of fire and fire fountains periodically appear. The lava flowing in these lakes is smooth and sinuous. The surface cools into a dark skin, which is torn and cracked by the currents, and by the movements of beljuril dragons. The dragons rarely leave their lakes, except when a new eruption is imminent. At this time, the dragons take flight, seeking out new lakes or other large concentrations of lava. The beljuril dragon lair is a complex consisting of the lava lake

Beljuril Dragon Ages and Abilities

Age	Body Length	Tail Length	AC	Breath weapon	Spells	MR	Treasure	XP
1	3–6	2–5	–3	2d10+1	Nil	Nil	1d10 gems	2,000
2	6–16	5–11	–2	3d10+2	Nil	Nil	2d10	3,000
3	16–30	11–20	–1	5d10+3	Nil	Nil	3d10	5,000
4	30–42	20–35	0	7d10+4	1	5%	4d10	8,000
5	42–56	35–42	–1	10d10+5	2,1	10%	5d10	10,000
6	56–65	42–50	–2	12d10+6	2,2	15%	6d10,1d4 meteor	12,000
7	65–73	50–59	–3	13d10+7	2,2,1	20%	7d10, 2d4	14,000
8	73–86	59–63	–4	14d10+8	2,2,2	25%	8d10, 3d4	16,000
9	86–90	63–66	–5	14d10+9	2,2,3	30%	9d10, 4d4	17,000
10	90–96	66–69	–6	14d10+10	2,2,3,1	35%	10d10, 5d4	18,000
11	96–115	69–72	–7	14d10+11	2,3,3,2	40%	11d10, 6d4	19,000
12	115–125	72–75	–8	14d10+12	3,3,3,2	45%	12d10, 7d4	20,000

The beljuril dragon must live near a volcano or other seismically active area.

and the surrounding caves and mountain structures nearby.

Great treasures can be found in beljuril dragon lairs. However, any precious metals or gems are usually found in a raw state. Beljuril dragons swim among rare ores carried into the lava lakes from deep within the earth (type and value may be determined by the DM). The lakes are also 50% likely to contain liquid silver and copper (worth 1,000–8,000 cp and sp respectively); the problem, of course, is extracting and cooling it. Gold deposits worth 1,000–10,000 can be found under and around the lava lakes, and there is an 80% chance of finding 1,000–10,000 gp worth of molten ornamental stone. The old rock around beljuril dragon lairs is studded with beljurils. (Most beljuril strikes are found in old beljuril dragon lairs that haven't been used for generations.) See the dragon age category chart for the number of beljurils found at each life stage of the dragon. There is also a 60% chance of finding 1d100 other semi-precious gems such as quartzes, crystals, and rainbow obsidian. At age level 6 and above, beljuril dragons start to collect meteorites, or star metal. One of the few times that they travel away from seismic areas is to collect this material, which aids them in their spellcasting and in their arcane rituals. The dragon age category chart lists the number of star metal pieces (at base value 10,000 gp) that the dragon has collected. There is a 10% chance of finding 1d6 magical items, but only those items that can withstand great heat are found at a beljuril dragon's lair.

Ecology: Beljuril dragons derive sustenance from seismic energy, and they must stay in a seismically active environment to remain healthy. They don't actually consume gems and minerals, but surround themselves with them by filtering the seismic energy need to survive through the crystalline structures of the stones. Beljuril dragons must remain in an area of at least 300 SFPs. If the area is less active, the dragons suffers 1 point of damage for every 10 SFP under 300. If they reach less than 10 hit points, they fall into a deep slumber until they are moved or the seismic energy increases.

In the rare places where beljuril dragons live, they lay and bury their eggs deep in the earth. Each dragon is born at the same time as a new volcano. The hatchling must survive heat and pressure greater than that experienced later in life, so it begins life with an unusually strong AC score. From youth to young adulthood, the beljuril dragon experiences growth spurts in which it sheds some of its protective scales, and its AC worsens. As it matures, the dragon regains its protection as new scales grow and harden.

Lacunae Ghost

CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Volcanic ruins
FREQUENCY	Very rare
ORGANIZATION	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Special
DIET	Seismic energy, energy of living beings
INTELLIGENCE	Low (5–7)
TREASURE	I
ALIGNMENT	Neutral evil
NO. APPEARING	1–100
ARMOR CLASS	0
MOVEMENT	9
HIT DICE	10
THAC0	11
NO. OF ATTACKS	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK	1–6
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Constitution drain
SPECIAL DEFENSES	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Immune to electricity and mind-affecting spells such as *sleep* or *charm*
SIZE	Varies (Usually M)
MORALE	Fearless (19–20)
XP VALUE	7,000

This creature appears only as a thin gray outline of a person killed in an ashfall or pyroclastic surge. Not strictly a ghost, these creatures are host spirits animated by parasitic creatures from the Plane of Vacuum. These parasites occasionally travel on the Prime Material Plane through the hearts of volcanoes, where they wait to be ejected onto the surface.

Many lacunae ghosts lie dormant for thousands of years, only to awaken when someone disturbs the ashfall from the eruption that killed the creature's host. When awakened, the lacunae ghosts seek out active volcanoes, because the parasite must feed on a seismic energy source.

Lacunae ghosts are silent, but they sometimes try to speak. Someone viewing a lacunae ghost in profile can read its lips with a successful Reading Lips proficiency check (or an Intelligence check at a –6 penalty) if the observer understands the ghost's language. The words it repeats are generally the last words of its host, often ending in terrified screams. *Speak with dead* yields better communication and gives the ghost a harsh voice with which it speaks the language of its host. Under the influence of this and similar spells, lacunae ghosts speak mainly of their search for seismic energy, considering other matters unimportant. The spell yields communication with the parasite, not the original victim.

Combat: Lacunae ghosts can be harmed only by weapons made from materials of volcanic origin. Obsidian weapons gain a +2 attack and damage bonus against them. Anyone struck by the creature in combat suffers 1d6 points of damage and must make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation or lose one point of Constitution. Lacunae ghosts are immune to the effects of *charm, sleep, hold,* and electricity-based spells. Holy water and *dispel evil* spells do not affect them, but they are vulnerable to cold-based spells. "Killing" a lacunae ghost only stops it from walking for 1 month. After that time, it reconstitutes and seeks out the one who woke it. Lacunae ghosts can be turned, but the effect is also only temporary.

Habitat/Society: As lacunae ghosts awake, they seek out and attack the creature that disturbed their rest. Once awakened, the only people whom lacunae ghosts won't attack are the living descendants of their hosts. This qualm is thought to be the last vestige of the original victims' will: their refusal to kill their own progeny. For this reason, locals often believe that lacunae ghosts are a curse on foreigners. There is usually no treasure found near lacunae ghosts, but there is a 30% chance of finding a Treasure Type I cache and a 5% chance for the art objects to have survived intact.

Ecology: On its own, the vacuum parasite is weak. It becomes powerful by attaching itself to a spirit of the Prime Material plane and borrowing its strength. It draws seismic energy through the void left by the victim's physical body in the ashfall, even though it might wander far from that site. The only way to prevent the lacunae ghost from walking is to find the "mold" it has made in the ash and fill it with some porous substance (such as plaster or viscous clay). This works because the vacuum parasite needs a void through which to draw the seismic energy it needs to live. Anyone can fill the mold; it requires no special ceremony. Because finding the exact mold is difficult, local people knowledgeable about the phenomenon are a great asset to hunting down the creatures.

Living Lahar

CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Volcanic areas
FREQUENCY	Very rare
ORGANIZATION	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Constant
DIET	Everything in its path
INTELLIGENCE	Semi- (2–4)
TREASURE	Special
ALIGNMENT	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING	1
ARMOR CLASS	3
MOVEMENT	See below
HIT DICE	8
THAC0	13
NO. OF ATTACKS	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK	2–20
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Suffocate
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Unaffected by edged weapons
MAGIC RESISTANCE	30%
SIZE	G (25–100' wide, 25–100' long, 1–25' tall)
MORALE	Fearless (19–20)
XP VALUE	7,000

Lahars are the flows of seething black mud that boil down the side of an erupting volcano. They are frequently caused by ice at the mountaintop that is melted by the heat of thermal energy or when an eruption disrupts a crater lake full of hot, sulfurous water. Some of the worst volcanic destruction is caused by lahars. Lahars typically travel at high speeds and pick up boulders and other deadly debris as they go.

In rare cases, the seismic energy involved transforms them into living entities. As such, they are creatures of malevolent intelligence, rushing to feed on anything before them. Freed from the constraints of gravity and their own momentum, a living lahar can travel where it wishes.

Combat: When it is born, a lahar is oddly silent. As it first boils down the side of a mountain, it automatically surprises its victims. Later, lahars are noisy and sound of rushing water and moving boulders, so there is normally no chance for a living lahar to surprise its victim. If someone is standing in a place where a normal lahar could not travel, uphill for example, the living lahar has a normal chance to surprise the individual.

Living lahars travel at almost unimaginable speed (MV 45). Over time, they begin to slow and might finally die through inaction. With each passing turn, the living lahar loses one point of movement until it finally reaches zero.

Living lahars travel close to the ground and attack by subsuming everything in their way. Objects in the creature's path must make a successful saving throw vs. crushing blow at a –2 penalty or be destroyed. Living beings must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or perish. Those surviving the saving throw suffer 2d10 points of damage from the hot mud avalanche. Edged weapons, magical or not, cause no damage to a living lahar and must make saving throws vs. crushing blow or be destroyed. Strong barriers such as *walls of iron* can stop living lahars' movement.

Habitat/Society: Living lahars are born from volcanic eruptions caused by the work of magic. They live on seismic energy (absorbing 1 SFP per turn). If all seismic energy in its path is depleted, a living lahar stops moving. It also stops if its speed is reduced to zero, and it is theoretically dead. It can be animated again through the use of magic, but the spells that would do this have been (fortunately) lost or destroyed.

Living lahars rarely encounter each other. They never reproduce but attain life spontaneously from unusual bursts of seismic energy. Their communication is limited; some sages claim to have learned their language, only to realize that the living lahars had nothing to say. Living lahars can travel under the ocean, where they carve deep submarine trenches that later might be inhabited by deep sea creatures. The action of digging these trenches creates great tidal waves on the surface.

Ecology: A living lahar consumes almost everything in its path, including seismic energy. After a region is scoured by a living lahar, it is out of danger from seismic events for a time.

A living lahar enriches the soil by depositing volcanic minerals on any land over which it passes. These minerals may be worth 10–1,000 gp if properly collected and separated, but the greater value is in the bountiful crops (twice normal yield) for 1d6 years. Additionally, clay particles from living lahars (known as quick clay) are valuable to wizards, as they provide alternate components for such spells as *transmute rock to mud*, *disintegrate*, *move earth*, and others.

Legend holds that galeb duhr are eventually born out of the remains of living lahars, but the galeb duhr deny this utterly.

PRIMITIVE PCs

SEVEN MONSTROUS NEW HEROES

by Lloyd Brown III
illustrated by
Andrew Goldhawk

Beyond the vast crowds of civilization, feral creatures lurk in the dark corners of the earth. Most of these savages prey on humans, leading to tales of their monstrous natures, yet rare members of these reclusive tribes seek to join civilized cultures. These exceptional individuals overcome their ingrained barbarism and explore the world alongside humans, sometimes developing close friendships along the way.

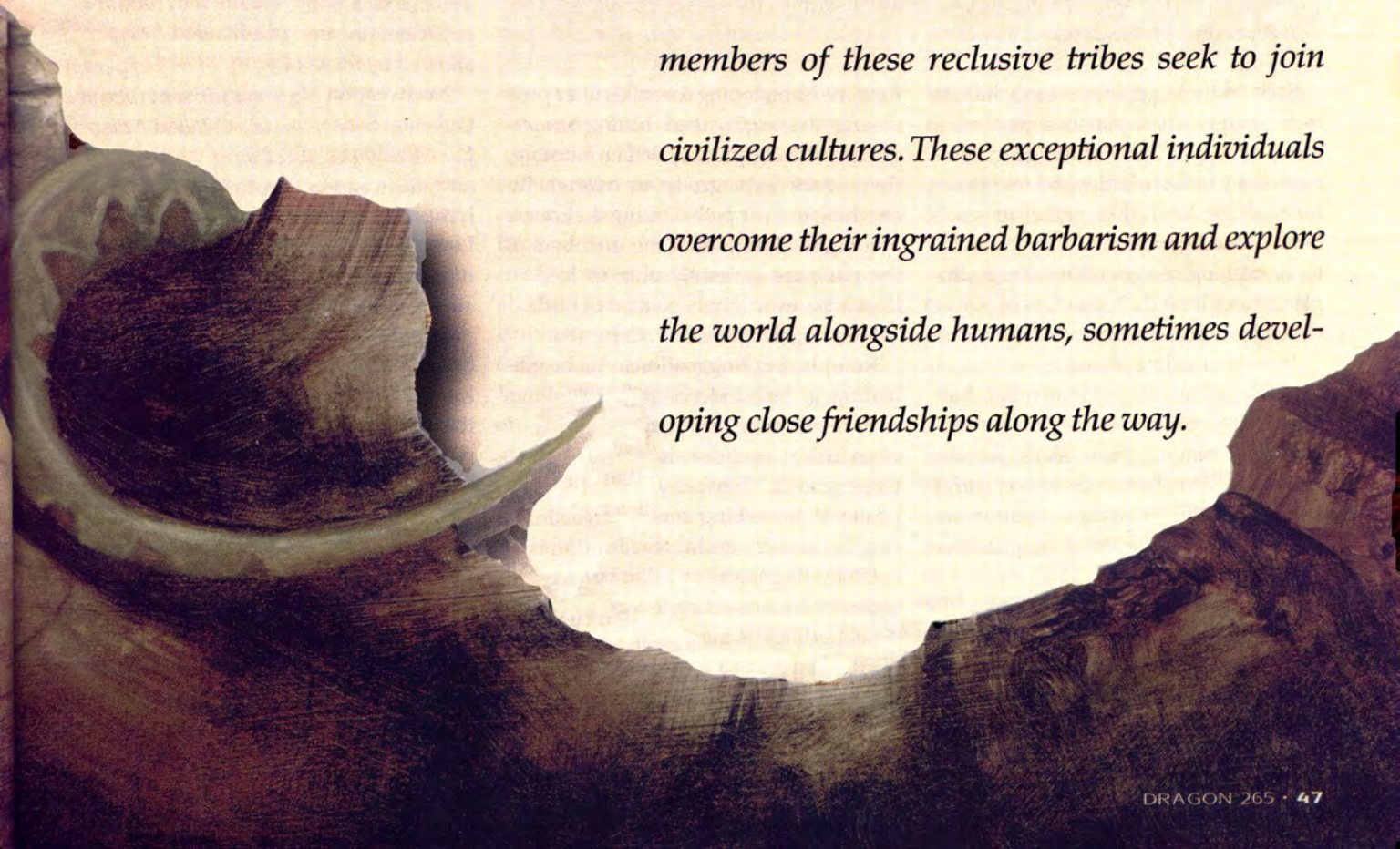


TABLE 1: ABILITY REQUIREMENTS

	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Gibberling	3/18(50)	3/18	6/18	3/14	3/14	3/12
Grimlock	3/18(90)	3/18	7/18	3/18	3/17	3/17
Mold man	3/18(50)	3/18	3/18	3/17	3/18	3/15
Quaggoth	6/18(00)	3/18	5/18	3/14	3/16	3/15
Su-folk	3/18(50)	3/19	5/18	3/18	7/18	3/13
Troglodyte	3/18(75)	3/16	3/18	3/15	3/17	3/12
Yeti	10/20	3/18	5/19	3/16	3/18	3/16

TABLE 2: ABILITY SCORE RACIAL ADJUSTMENTS

	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Gibberling	—	—	+1	–1	—	–1
Grimlock	—	—	+1	—	–1	—
Mold man	–1	—	—	–1	+1	—
Quaggoth	+1	—	—	—	—	–1
Su-folk	—	+1	+1	—	—	–2
Troglodyte	—	—	—	–1	—	—
Yeti	+2	—	—	–1	—	–1

TABLE 3: MOVEMENT & NATURAL ATTACKS

Race	Move	Size	Natural AC	Natural attacks
Gibberling	9	M	10	As human
Grimlock	12	M	5	1 claw for 1d6
Mold man	12	S–M	4	1 hand for 1d6
Quaggoth	12	L	6	2 claws for 1d4 each
Su-folk	9	M	6	2 claws for 1d4 each (4 if hanging by tail), bite for 2d4
Troglodyte	12	M	5	2 claws for 1d2 each, bite for 1d4+1
Yeti	15	L	6	2 claws for 1d6 each

Most PC members of these races do not use their natural attacks, preferring the more "civilized" use of weapons. If they do use their natural attacks, they should suffer reaction penalties among nonsavages who witness the savage behavior (–1 to –3, depending on the circumstances).

Each of these primitive races has its own unique characteristics, but as a group they have several things in common. They build no cities and few structures of any kind, they gather in small family-based groups, and they know little or nothing of agriculture. Their simple cultures limit their selection of player character classes. In particular, they have little understanding of magic.

Like demihuman and humanoid characters, these primitive races may multiclass, diversifying their skills for the immediate benefit of an improved rate of survival. These multiclass options are listed on **Table 5.** None of these primitive races can dual-class.

Gibberling

Gibberlings feel at home only in the dark, surrounded by hundreds of allies. Most gibberlings live for nothing other than the hunt, loping for miles after prey during the night, then hiding underground during the day. When hunting, they attack as a group to overwhelm anything in their path. During the course of a night's hunt, all of the members of the pack are generally able to feed at least once, even if only on a rat or bird.

Languages: Gibberling, Common.

Roleplaying Suggestions: A lone gibberling is rare indeed. PC gibberlings tend to associate with large groups and often travel or fight in the middle of those groups. They are violent and simplistic. If something confuses a gibberling, his or her natural reaction is to kill it. Gibberling thieves tend to be thugs or highway robbers acting in a group.

Gibberlings think in terms of numbers. When confronted with a problem, a gibberling tries to bring in help. A gibberling PC might begin an adventure by trying to hire a few dozen men-at-arms. Given a choice between a dozen copper pieces and a single gold coin, a gibberling would probably make the wrong decision. To a gibberling, more is almost always better.

As player characters, gibberlings prefer the direct approach, whether the challenge is combat, diplomacy, or romance. This trait can make them good and predictable friends, but it also makes dealing with them a bit touchy. Like children, they don't hesitate to say what is on their minds. Unlike most children, gibberlings are quick with a weapon when they feel threatened.

Special Advantages: Gibberlings gain a +1 bonus to attacks and damage when using a short sword. Once per day, the bellowing and racket they make when entering combat can affect enemies as a *scare* spell, cast at the gibberling's level. This effect is not magical and cannot be interrupted as a spell.

Special Disadvantages: Gibberlings suffer a –1 penalty to all attacks, saving throws, and proficiency checks in daylight or within the area of bright light such as that produced by a *continual light* spell.

Weapon Proficiencies: The first proficiency learned must be Short Sword. Gibberlings whose class does not permit the use of a short sword may become proficient in any one-handed weapon allowed by their class.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *General:* Direction Sense, Swimming. *Priest:* Religion (includes gibberling superstitions and omens). *Rogue*: Blind-fighting, Jumping, Tumbling. *Warrior:* Animal Lore, Blind-fighting, Endurance, Running, Survival (subterranean or temperate forest), Tracking.

Suggested Kits: Bandit, beggar, bounty hunter, sellsword, tramp, tunnel rat. Gibberlings do not adopt kits, like the scout or mystic, that require long periods of solitude.

Grimlock

Grimlocks are fierce creatures who love the darkness. They are totally blind, but their incredible hearing and sense of smell allow them to function as well as most creatures with functional eyes. Between their other senses, grimlocks can effectively "see" within a radius of

20 feet. Constant loud noise hinders this sense, rendering it effective to only 10 feet and forcing them to make all attack rolls at a –2 penalty . Similar assaults on their sense of smell can reduce their "sight" as well.

All grimlocks look similar to each other. Except for variations in dress and size, outsiders cannot tell one from another. Grimlocks recognize each other by subtleties of movement and smell. This form of recognition allows grimlocks to "see through" disguises. In fact, a grimlock might not even realize a character is attempting to pass as someone else, unless the disguised character is clever enough to take the grimlock's sense of smell and awareness of movement into consideration when adopting the disguise.

Languages: Grimlock, Medusa, Mind Flayer, Undercommon, Common.

Roleplaying Suggestions: Grimlocks have a great passion for art, although their own music must be subdued enough not to overwhelm their keen hearing. Soft, monotonous chants please them. They admire rich brocades and other fabrics that they can feel, regardless of the colors. A large, extensive selection of aromatic incenses is a mark of status similar to a great collection of literature or paintings among humans.

While gibberlings are gregarious, even with creatures of other races, grimlocks have a definite preference for others of their own race. Grimlock player characters, however, find themselves at odds with members of their own race because of their association with nongrimlocks and often identify with one race in particular. Thus, a grimlock PC might grow attached to a dwarven friend and come to distrust elves and dislike orcs.

Grimlocks PCs might be motivated by a simple desire to sample the arts of other cultures. They are often rightly proud of their combat ability and might seek challenges among members of other races. Displaying great talent in art or martial prowess is a good way to earn respect from a grimlock.

Special Advantages: Because they are already blind, grimlocks suffer no penalties for acting in the dark. Naturally, they are immune to all spells that affect the eyes (*blindness*, *light*, and most illusions, for instance). They gain a +1 bonus on all surprise rolls due to their exceptional hearing. They make saving throws as 6th-level fighters except when the saving throws for their chosen class are better.

Blind at birth, grimlocks enjoy heightened senses of hearing and touch.

Special Disadvantages: Grimlocks suffer severe penalties if their hearing or sense of smell is blocked. Grimlocks who become deaf for any reason are effectively blinded, suffering a –4 penalty on attacks. Removing their sense of smell eliminates their bonus against surprise. Githyanki hate grimlocks and attack them in preference to other creatures except mind flayers and githzerai.

Weapon Proficiencies: Battle-ax, Great Axe, Broadsword, Longsword, Two-handed Sword, Bastard Sword, Footman's Flail, Maul, Spear, Great Club, Morning Star, Scythe. Grimlocks generally shun shields, and a DM may prohibit shield use completely. Since their sensory range is limited, grimlocks never use missile weapons.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *General:* Artistic Ability, Direction Sense, Firebuilding, Seamstress/Tailor, Singing, Weather Sense, Weaving. *Priest:* Herbalism, Religion. *Rogue:* Jumping, Set Snares, Tightrope Walking, Ventriloquism. *Warrior:* Endurance, Hunting, Mountaineering, Running, Set Snares, Survival.

Suggested Kits: Assassin, mercenary, mine rowdy, oracle, outcast, pariah, prophet, scholar, seer, war priest, wizard slayer.

Mold Man

Mold men are fungal creatures with fibrous bodies similar in composition to sugar cane, tough and stringy. As mold men advance in level or Hit Dice, they also grow in size. With each level, PC mold men add about 6 inches in height and 2d10 pounds in weight, up to a maximum size of about 7 feet. Multi-classed characters use their highest level when determining size.

TABLE 4: CLASSES & LEVEL LIMITS

	Warrior	Wizard	Priest	Rogue	Other
Gibberling	F 10	—	Sh 7	T 10	—
Grimlock	F 12	*	Sh 9	T 11	—
		WDr 7			
Mold men	F 8	—	—	T 10	—
Quaggoths	F 10	—	—	T 8	Psi 7
Su-folk	F 9	—	—	T 9	Psi 12
Troglodyte	F 9	—	—	T 8	—
Yeti	F 12, R10	WDr 8	Sh 9	T 6	—

F = fighter, R = ranger, WDr = witch doctor, Sh = shaman, T = thief, Psi = psionicist

*Optionally, DMs might allow a grimlock to advance to 8th level as a mage if the character can find a way to overcome the character's blindness.

TABLE 5: MULTI-CLASS OPTIONS

Gibberling	Fighter/thief
Grimlock	Fighter/thief, fighter/shaman, fighter/witch doctor
Mold men	Fighter/thief
Quaggoths	Fighter/thief
Su-folk	Fighter/thief, fighter/psionicist, psionicist/thief
Troglodyte	Fighter/thief
Yeti	Fighter/thief, fighter/shaman, fighter/witch doctor, shaman/thief, witch doctor/thief (may substitute ranger for fighter entries)

TABLE 6: THIEF SKILLS RACIAL ADJUSTMENTS

	PP	OL	F/RT	MS	HS	DN	CW	RL
Gibberling	—	—	—	–5	+5	—	+5	—
Grimlock	—	+5	–10	+5	—	+20	—	[A]
Mold men	+5	—	—	—	[B]	—	–15	—
Quaggoth	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Su-folk	–5	–5	–5	—	—	+5	+15	—
Troglodyte	—	+5	+5	–5	+10	—	—	—
Yeti	–5	–5	—	—	[C]	—	–5	—

A. Grimlocks have no chance to Read Languages.

B. In their native terrain, mold men add 10% to their chance to hide in shadows.

C. Yeti add 50% to their ability to Hide in Shadows in snow. Even non-rogue yeti have this ability at 50%.

After reaching 5 feet in height, mold men overcome the –1 penalty to their initial Strength and gain that point back.

Mold men prefer to associate with other plantlike creatures like myconids, shriekers, and thornies, the latter of whom they keep as pets. They avoid shambling mounds, because even their champions often cannot avoid being devoured by them.

Languages: Mold men don't naturally speak in words, but they have a simple language of taps and hoots. Learning spoken languages is difficult for them and requires two proficiency slots per language. Players of mold men characters are urged to take Common as a proficiency despite the additional cost. They can learn to read and write normally, although this proficiency must be learned after 1st level.

Roleplaying Suggestions: Since they are more closely related to plants than any other PC race, mold men are perhaps the most alien race a player can run. They do not generally care for treasure, at least not initially. Conversely, what is theirs is theirs, and strangers are not welcome to it. While this instinctive protectiveness applies most directly to food and hunting territory, it also applies to weapons, sleeping space—even friends.

Mold men consider themselves to be unique among all of the intelligent races. They consider animal intelligences inferior to their own, and they view the myconids as too limited in their interests. Their strong racial pride does not prevent mold men from being friendly, but it makes close friendship difficult because of their sense of superiority.

Mold man PCs might be on the surface world to learn about the life of animals (including humans). Some see themselves as protectors of plant life, although in a different way from the druids, who seek an ecological balance. Curiosity, not glory or wealth, is often a motivating factor for mold men.

Special Advantages: Mold men suffer only 1 point of damage (plus any magical bonuses) from any piercing weapon. Starting at 3rd level, they are immune to all electrical attacks. They are immune to *charm* spells except those that specifically affect plants. They always receive a saving throw vs. enchantments, even if one is not normally allowed. Since they are plant creatures, many carnivorous monsters won't hunt them for food, although they might attack the mold man for other reasons.

An ability unique to mold men is their continuing growth. If they lose a level to undead or spells, mold men shrink. If they grow to size M, mold men can use size M weapons without penalty. Generally, the size of armor that mold men can use changes every 2–3 levels, making it costly for them to replace. Fortunately, they have an excellent natural armor, so many mold men wear none.

Special Disadvantages: Certain spells or effects that affect plants often don't allow a saving throw. Some of these spells can kill a fungal creature instantly, making them terrifying to mold men.

Weapon Proficiencies: Spear or Club.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *General:* Agriculture, Animal Training (thornies), Artistic Ability. *Priest:* Herbalism (mold men gain a +1 bonus to Herbalism checks). *Rogue:* Blind-fighting. *Warrior:* Animal Lore (subterranean animals), Endurance, Hunting, Survival (subterranean or tropical/subtropical forests).

Suggested Kits: Animal master (similar to the kit presented in *The Complete Book of Dwarves*), beggar, investigator,

A Quaggoth thonot is a master of mental powers and a formidable ally for any adventuring group.

savage (fighter), scavenger, scout, sellsword, wilderness protector.

Quaggoth

Most quaggoth tribes exist only as slaves to other Underdark races. Although formidable fighters, especially compared to most surface races, their low Intelligence leaves them unable to compete with the cunning drow, duergar, and illithids.

Quaggoths tend to be nomadic, and PC quaggoth often have a strong sense of wanderlust. The only authority they respect is the word of their own *thonots* (see below). With this independence comes a strong aggressive streak. Quaggoths fight hard and play more roughly than others find comfortable. Slaps and pushes are common punctuation marks in quaggoth body language.

Languages: Undercommon, Duergar, Drow, or Common. Quaggoths don't have their own languages and so might consider any of these languages their native tongue. The DM is free to declare that an independent race of quaggoths has a dialect of one of these languages that is different enough to be considered a separate language.

Roleplaying Suggestions: PC quaggoths have fled to the surface to escape their former masters, and they attempt to live peacefully with humans and others rather than live in slavery in the Underdark. Other races, however, often misunderstand their natural aggressiveness, making survival and friendship difficult.

Thonots (psionicists) who leave the tribe usually do so with the intention of returning at some point. In quaggoth society, the thonot fills a role similar to the shamans of other races—performing ceremonies, interpreting omens, and tending the sick. PC thonots might seek knowledge to help their people, search for a new tribal home, or live as exiles.

Quaggoth characters of other classes are most often the survivors of a broken tribe, outcasts for some crime, or escaped slaves. These lonely individuals seek refuge among humans and demihumans and might seek revenge against the individuals responsible for their predicament. Some are on personal quests to end slavery everywhere. These individuals recruit others to their noble task and might even become leaders of adventuring parties.

Special Advantages: Quaggoths have infravision to 120 feet, making them excellent night or underground hunters. They are also immune to all poisons. If a quaggoth is wounded to below 25% of normal hit points, he or she enters a berserk state, adding a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls. The state lasts until the quaggoth dies or all enemies are dead or out of sight. A PC quaggoth can resist this berserk rage by making a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation: the saving throw must be made each round the character's hit points stay below 25% and the character remains in combat.

Special Disadvantages: Dark elves obstinately think all quaggoths should all be enslaved; they receive a +1 bonus to attack quaggoths. Many creatures of the Underdark prize the quaggoth's immunity to poison and psionic abilities, putting both to use for dark purposes. A quaggoth slave is a mark of distinction to

TABLE 7: AVERAGE HEIGHT & WEIGHT

	Height in Inches		Weight in Pounds	
	Base	Modifier	Base	Modifier
Gibberling	42/39	2d10	80/75	3d10
Grimlock	60/58	2d10	160/110	6d10
Mold men*	24/24	1d6	40/40	1d10
Quaggoth	72/66	2d10	200/180	6d10
Su-folk	44/48	1d10	90/110	3d10
Troglodyte	66/66	2d6	150/150	6d10
Yeti	72/68	3d10	280/250	8d10

Females tend to be lighter and shorter than males. Thus, the base numbers for height and weight are divided into male/female values. Note that the modifier still allows for a broad range in each category.

*Mold men begin at this size and grow with each Hit Die. The mold man section describes the details of this growth.

TABLE 8: AGE

	Starting Age	Maximum Age Range	
	Base Age	Variable	(Base + Variable)
Gibberling	12	1d4	60 + 6d10
Grimlock	17	1d4	120 + 1d100
Mold man	40	3d6	200 + 1d100
Quaggoth	14	1d6	100 + 3d10
Su-folk	10	1d3	90 + 1d20
Troglodyte	75	3d6	300+1d100
Yeti	12	1d3	60 + 2d10

TABLE 9: AGING EFFECTS

	Middle Age[A] (1/2 Base Max.)	Old Age[B] 2/3 Base Max.)	Venerable[C] (Base Max.)
Gibberling	30 years	40 years	60 years
Grimlock	60 years	80 years	120 years
Mold men[D]	100 years	133 years	200 years
Quaggoth	50 years	67 years	100 years
Su-folk	45 years	60 years	90 years
Troglodyte	150 years	200 years	300 years
Yeti	30 years	40 years	60 years

A. –1 Str/Con, +1 Int/Wis
B. –2 Str/Dex, –1 Con, +1 Wis
C. –1 Str/Dex/Con, +1 Int/Wis
D. Mold men do not lose Strength or Constitution as they age.

these races, and they often attempt to capture quaggoths at great risk.

Weapon Proficiencies: Starting quaggoth PCs learn the Axe, Dagger, or Club weapon proficiency, although they are likely to have only stone weapons.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *General:* Animal Handling, Animal Training, Brewing, Fire-building, Leatherworking, Mining, Pottery, Stonemasonry. *Warrior:* Animal Lore, Endurance, Hunting, Survival (subterranean).

Suggested Kits: Assassin, bandit, beast-rider (huge spiders), beggar, brute, gladiator, mercenary, mine rowdy, pit fighter, scavenger, sellsword, tramp, tribal defender, wizard slayer. Psionicist kits described in *DRAGON® Magazine* #255 that are appropriate for quaggoths include the militant psionicist and specialist (in Psychometabolism and Psychokinesis). Because of their roles in quaggoth society, thonots might—at the DM's discretion and invention—have kits similar to many priest kits, including: oracle, prophet, savage, seer, or wandering mystic.

Su-folk

While humans think of them as monsters, the su-folk (or Su, as they call themselves) have a rich, detailed culture that places high priority on the home. Their reputation and tendency toward evil stems from the custom of offering protection in return for protection: An evil wizard (or whoever makes the bargain) offers to protect one area, while the su-folk protect another. The su-folk understand the desire to protect the home and take this agreement seriously; many times, their partner does not.

The su-folk live in trees or caves, and they tend to stay in one place unless a serious danger threatens them. The exteriors of their homes are often decorated with artifacts from fallen foes to deter intruders. Activities around the home often center on the group rather than the individual. Made-up games are common, and free-form play is far more popular than human conventions like chess or cards.

Languages: Su, Common.

Roleplaying Suggestions: The su-folk tend to be slightly gullible, but only because they expect others to have the same sensible priorities they have. A little hard-earned experience with a liar goes a long way with these characters. They can quickly learn to double-deal, betray, and use other cutthroat tactics, often too well.

Individual su-folk are often in search of others of their kind. Without a mate, their spirits often sink and their energy to address problems seems subdued. They take interpersonal relationships seriously, although they freely forgive most transgressions. No offense in the su-folk culture earns as much contempt as infidelity.

Other PC su-folk might hunt for lost psionic lore, seek revenge for destroyed lands or families, or search for interesting stories to bring back to their homes. While fierce in combat, su-folk don't often seek it out and do not become mercenaries or assassins. They desire neither glory nor wealth.

Special Advantages: Su-folk fight fiercely in defense of their families. (This defense applies only to actual family members, not closely associated members of other races, unlike some other creatures.) When directly defending a

mate or young, su-folk double their number of attacks per round. The su-folk can maintain this surge of adrenaline for an amazing time: up to 4 turns for males and 6 turns for females. When in this defending frenzy, the su-folk can use only natural attacks, not weapons. Alternatively, the su-folk can engage in psionic combat or use psionic abilities while physically attacking at their normal rate. Su-folk gain this ability at 5th level. This ability is only useable once per day, regardless of the number of times the family is threatened.

The mildly poisonous flesh of su-folk makes creatures reluctant to bite them. This defense is handy when fighting monstrous creatures, but it rarely comes into play when fighting humanoids.

A lone su concealed in a tree forces enemies to suffer a –4 penalty on their surprise rolls. Su-folk can also hang by their tails and use all four claws to attack. Su-folk thieves who use this skill might be eligible for backstab bonuses, at the DM's discretion.

Lastly, su-folk enjoy a natural resistance to the hostile use of the same psionic abilities for which they show such predilection. Su-folk are immune to all telepathic attacks. The character is still subject to psionic attack modes, but not telepathic sciences or devotions.

Special Disadvantages: Su-folk have a bad reputation among most forest dwellers. The good creatures of the forest (this includes elves, centaurs, treants, and others) see the su-folk as dangerous and unpredictable. Among these races, su-folk suffer a +3 penalty to all reaction rolls. When dealing with neutral denizens of the forest (dryads, druids, and sprites, for example), su-folk suffer a +1 penalty to reaction rolls.

Weapon Proficiencies: Due to their impressive natural attacks, many su-folk don't take proficiency in any human weapons. Learning weapons always costs the su-folk an additional proficiency slot, making fighters specialized in the use of human weapons rare.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *General:* Artistic Ability, Direction Sense, Firebuilding, Leatherworking, Weather Sense, Weaving. *Rogue:* Juggling, Jumping, Local History, Set Snares, Tightrope Walking, Tumbling. *Warrior:* Animal Lore, Endurance, Gaming, Hunting, Set Snares, Survival (forest or subterranean), Tracking.

If you can ignore their smell, trogolodytes make great door-openers.

Suggested Kits: Bandit, savage, scout, forestlord, savage (fighter), tribal defender, wilderness protector, wizard slayer. Appropriate psionicist kits from in *Dragon Magazine* #255 include the specialist (Telepathy & Psychometablism) and the pioneer.

Troglodyte

Troglodytes are secretive reptilian creatures who dwell underground. They grudgingly form alliances with other races, and sometimes whole tribes are enslaved by powerful creatures. An independent tribe is interested only in its own survival and, to a lesser degree, the destruction of other races.

Troglodytes believe in the right of the strong to rule. The leadership of the tribe is often tested, which the troglodytes think benefits the group—a weak leader should not be permitted to lead. They recognize that strength includes more than just quick claws and sharp teeth, however. They acknowledge cunning, stealth, and knowledge as sources of strength. All too often in troglodyte society, however, these qualities fall to a javelin ambush.

Languages: Troglodyte, Orcish, and Common.

Roleplaying Suggestions: Player character troglodytes are outside of their tribe's hierarchy because of their decision to leave their home. Thus, they often try to find their place in another group, usually by testing themselves against everyone in it to find out who stands where. They act in accordance with alignment, so a lawful good troglodyte does not try to kill other party members to find out how strong they are. Instead, the troglodyte might watch a fighter in combat, try to sneak up on the party's scout while he or she is on patrol, or question tactical orders during a battle.

Troglodytes tend to form quick opinions and harbor racial prejudices as well. This combination of poor social skills

FLINTWORKING
General, Dexterity +1
The character is proficient at making small tools and weapons out of flint or other stone materials. A skilled worker can make a flint arrow-head or ax in about 15 minutes, using only the piece of flint that is to be the tool and another stone. Weapons made from flint function as other stone tools. That is, they have a 1-in-6 chance of breaking whenever maximum damage is rolled, decided after inflicting the damage. They also inflict less damage than metal weapons (–1 or by description; see *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* or *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Combat & Tactics*).

makes it hard to deal with them sometimes. If the first example of a given race impresses them, however (possibly by being better than them at something they consider important), they tend to look favorably on other members of the same race.

PC troglodytes often seek to rise to the top of the totem pole in whatever group they join. In a priestly hierarchy, their lack of social skills means their success is limited, but in a mercenary band or a thieves' guild, they excel. They tend to be competitive and often have great ambition to lead.

Special Advantages: Troglodytes have infravision to 90 feet. They also gain a +3 bonus to their attack rolls when using their unique javelins. Troglodytes have a natural camouflage that allows them to become effectively invisible when standing still. This camouflage is instinctive and takes effect within 1 round. Finally, angry or combatant troglodytes exude a terrible odor that affects humans and demihumans (and other creatures, at the DM's discretion). Any creatures within 10 feet must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or lose 1d6 points of Strength, which return in 10 rounds.

Special Disadvantages: Troglodytes cannot control their odor and might affect friendly creatures (but not other troglodytes, who are immune). A wide variety of creatures return the racial prejudices that many troglodytes show and assume that troglodytes are evil and dangerous.

Weapon Proficiencies: Any swords, Battle-ax, Morning Star, Troglodyte Javelin. The DM is justified in declaring that the troglodyte's initial weapons are made of stone and that the character cannot begin with normal weapons. The character is free to use normal metal weapons once he or she encounters them. The troglodyte javelin is fully described in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *General:* Animal Handling, Brewing, Fire-building, Flintworking, Leatherworking, Mining, Pottery, Stonemasonry. *Warrior:* Animal Lore, Endurance, Hunting, Survival (subterranean).

Suggested Kits: Bandit, bounty hunter, brute, gladiator, mercenary, mine rowdy, myrmidon, pit fighter, sellsword, scavenger, shadow, tribal defender, thug, wizard slayer.

Yeti

Yeti are simple folk who live at extreme altitudes. They prefer to avoid contact with other races and often flee instead of fighting. If unable to flee, they are fierce fighters capable of outlasting less dedicated opponents. Yeti are most likely to befriend a single character whom they have seen often and never in contact with openly hostile creatures (such as white dragons).

Languages: Yeti, Common.

Roleplaying Suggestions: Yeti, like many primitive creatures, avoid contact with other races. They tend to be shy and don't speak much, even among close friends. They avoid cities but might occasionally visit a small town. Some yeti conquer their fear of crowds when they realize that it is possible to hide in plain view by simply not attracting attention, but the sensory assault of a city is enough to keep them away unless a visit is necessary. The yeti are among the most gentle of the primitive races, regardless of alignment.

The PC yeti might be in search of trustworthy companions to help deal with a great threat to his or her homeland: a white dragon, an evil cloud giant, or another danger. He might be forced to leave because of changes to his homeland, such as the incursion of another race (possibly humans), changing climate, or magical changes to the land. Since yeti prefer smaller groups with great interpersonal loyalties, life in an adventuring party is attractive to them.

Special Advantages: Any opponent within 10 feet of the yeti must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation or meet the yeti's eyes and be paralyzed from fright for 3 full rounds. A creature that saves against this attack once is immune to it for the duration of the combat. The gaze attack affects no more than one opponent per round. The yeti gains this ability at 4th level.

Any creatures touching the yeti for a full round or longer suffers 2d8 points of damage from cold each round. A mere touch (from an attack or healing spell, for example) inflicts only 1d4 points of damage. If the yeti spends significant time away from his frigid mountain home, this radiant cold aura fades in about 6 months.

Yeti are invisible if motionless in heavy snow. A yeti wearing any sort of armor or significant clothing suffers penalties from –5% to –75%, depending on the amount worn (DM's discretion).

Special Disadvantages. Yeti suffer 50% more damage from any heat- or fire-based attacks. Their fur is marketable in some areas, making them popular targets for hunters and traders.

Weapon Proficiencies: Yeti are the most likely of all primitive races (except maybe su-folk) to use their natural weapons in close combat. Fighters often become specialized in wrestling to maximize the effects of their chilling touch. They prefer human weapons such as a spear or shortbow for hunting.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *General:* Direction Sense, Fire-building, Weather Sense. *Priest:* Astrology, Herbalism, Local History, Religion. *Warrior:* Animal Lore, Endurance, Hunting, Set Snares, Survival (mountainous regions), Tracking.

Suggested Kits: Animal master, barbarian, bandit, beastmaster, giant killer, guardian, medicine man, mountain man, oracle, pathfinder, prophet, scout, tribal defender, wandering mystic, warden. Some of these kits appear in *The Complete Ranger's Handbook.*

Lloyd has bought a game store. Visit him at WarDogs Game Center in Jacksonville, Florida, or on the web at www.sgtsniff.com.

by Jeff "Zippy" Quick

MARVEL SUPER HEROES ADVENTURE GAME

Captain Mar-Vell

6G	Strength
8A	Agility
6B	Intellect
6D	Willpower
3	Edge
5(30)	Hand Size

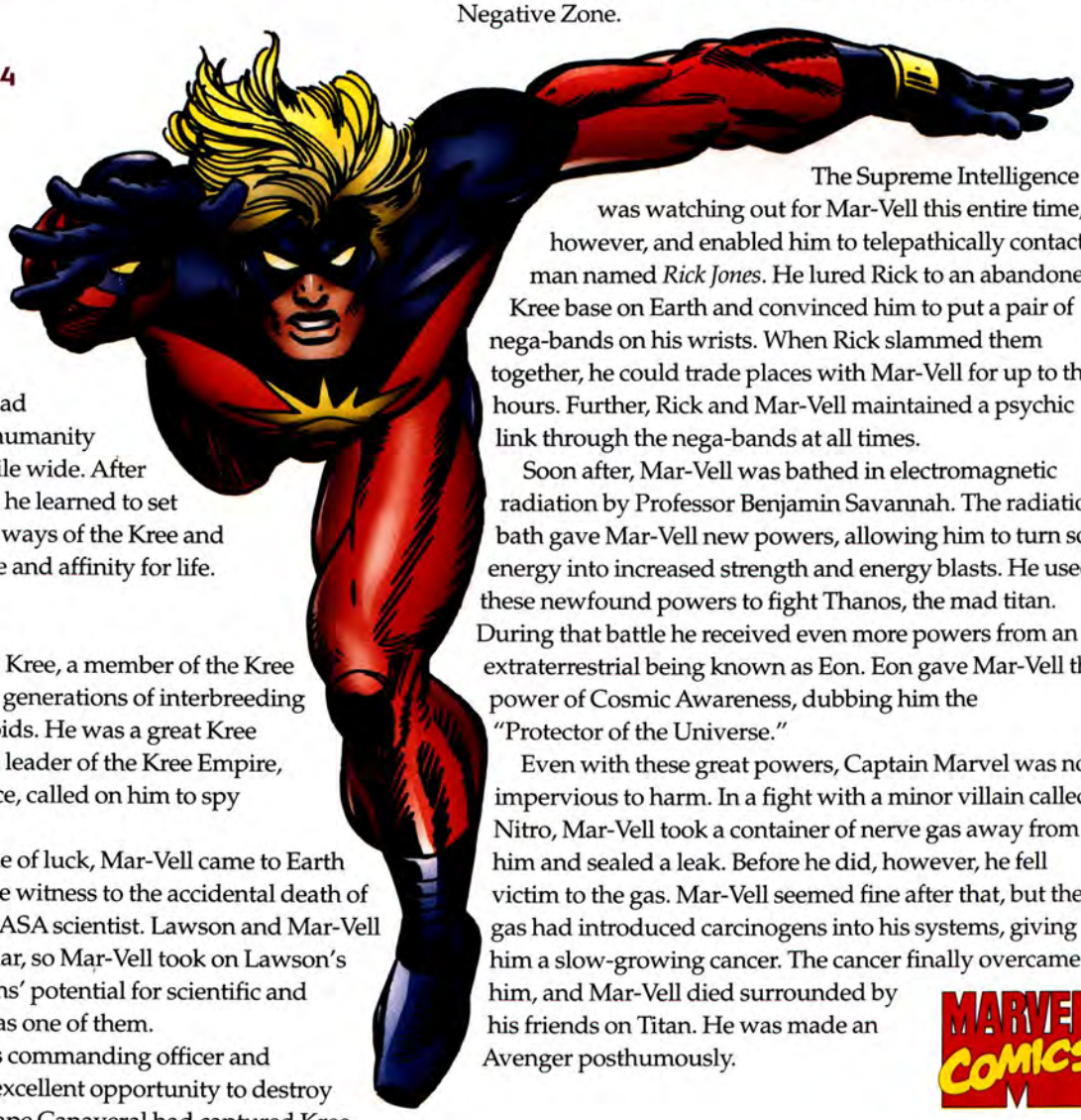
Skills

Brawling, Wrestling
Aerial Combat, Contingent Attack, Marksmanship, Piloting
Aeronautics, Astronomy, Espionage
Military

Powers: Captain Mar-Vell went through several stages of power. This entry represents his power level at the time of his death, with nega-bands and altered genetics.

Body Armor +6
Energy Blast
Cosmic Awareness 4
Flight 9
Space Flight 12
Life Support

Calling: Protector
Personality: Mar-Vell was a powerful warrior for the Kree. In addition to an indomitable spirit, he had strong sympathies for humanity and a heroic streak a mile wide. After an encounter with Eon, he learned to set aside the fierce warrior ways of the Kree and achieved an inner peace and affinity for life.



History

Mar-Vell was a "white" Kree, a member of the Kree race, that resulted from generations of interbreeding with non-Kree humanoids. He was a great Kree warrior even before the leader of the Kree Empire, the Supreme Intelligence, called on him to spy on Earth.

In an incredible stroke of luck, Mar-Vell came to Earth just in time to be the sole witness to the accidental death of Dr. Walter Lawson, a NASA scientist. Lawson and Mar-Vell looked amazingly similar, so Mar-Vell took on Lawson's life and spied on humans' potential for scientific and psionic breakthroughs as one of them.

Yon-Rogg, Mar-Vell's commanding officer and romantic rival, saw an excellent opportunity to destroy him. The scientists at Cape Canaveral had captured Kree Sentry #459 and were studying it. Yon-Rogg activated the sentry and ordered it to destroy Mar-Vell. Not wanting to blow his cover, Mar-Vell appeared in his Kree uniform to defeat it. The sentry called Mar-Vell by name in the fight. Since Mar-Vell's uniform was so unusual, people assumed he was a new super-hero known as "Captain Marvel."

A series of adventures and betrayals followed for Captain Marvel at the hands of his Kree enemies, Yon-Rogg, Ronan, and Zarek. His love, Una, was killed, and Mar-Vell was accused of disobedience to the Empire. He received new powers, and he became trapped in the Negative Zone.

The Supreme Intelligence was watching out for Mar-Vell this entire time, however, and enabled him to telepathically contact a man named *Rick Jones*. He lured Rick to an abandoned Kree base on Earth and convinced him to put a pair of nega-bands on his wrists. When Rick slammed them together, he could trade places with Mar-Vell for up to three hours. Further, Rick and Mar-Vell maintained a psychic link through the nega-bands at all times.

Soon after, Mar-Vell was bathed in electromagnetic radiation by Professor Benjamin Savannah. The radiation bath gave Mar-Vell new powers, allowing him to turn solar energy into increased strength and energy blasts. He used these newfound powers to fight Thanos, the mad titan. During that battle he received even more powers from an extraterrestrial being known as Eon. Eon gave Mar-Vell the power of Cosmic Awareness, dubbing him the "Protector of the Universe."

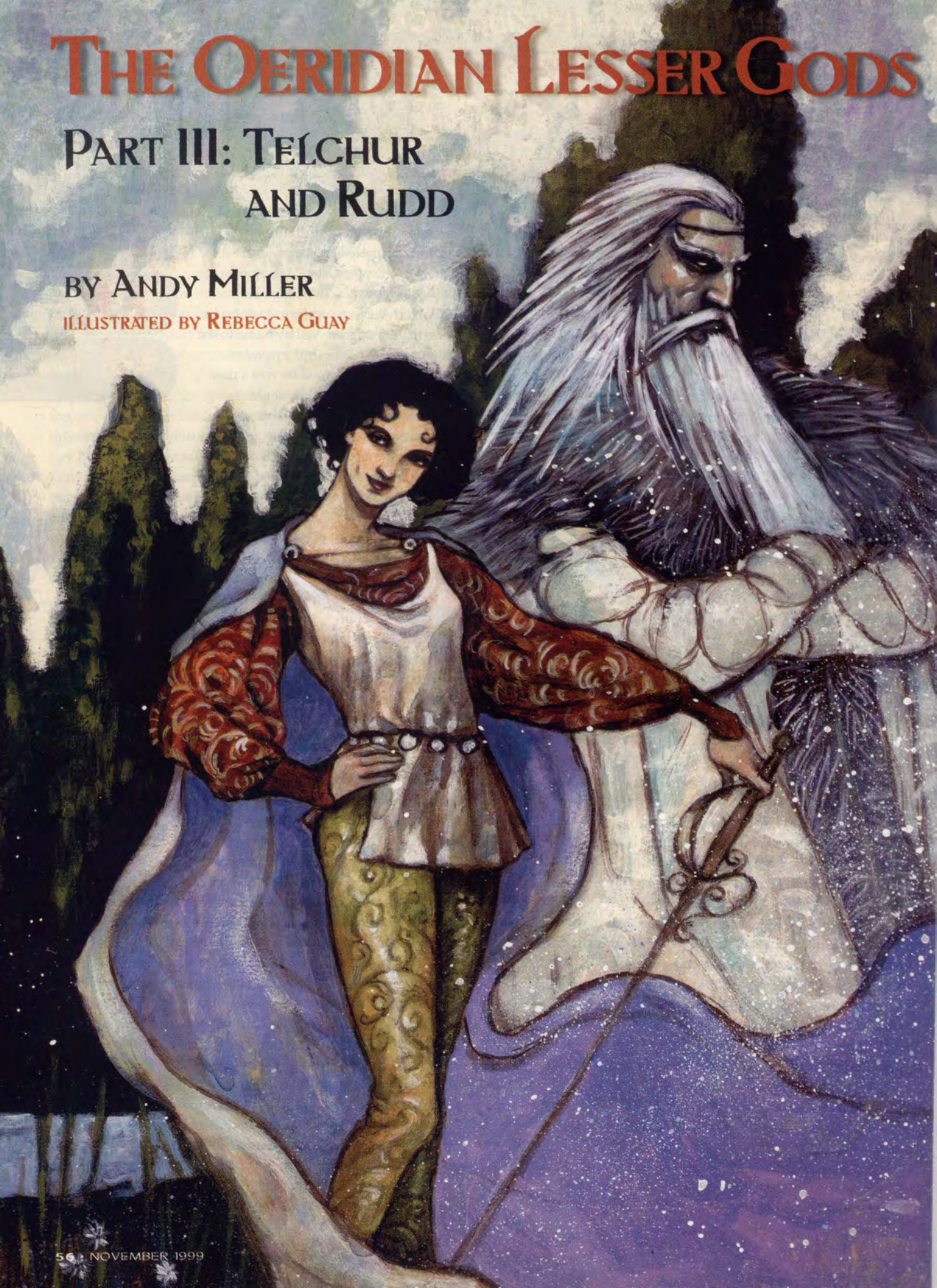
Even with these great powers, Captain Marvel was not impervious to harm. In a fight with a minor villain called Nitro, Mar-Vell took a container of nerve gas away from him and sealed a leak. Before he did, however, he fell victim to the gas. Mar-Vell seemed fine after that, but the gas had introduced carcinogens into his systems, giving him a slow-growing cancer. The cancer finally overcame him, and Mar-Vell died surrounded by his friends on Titan. He was made an Avenger posthumously.

MARVEL COMICS

The Oeridian Lesser Gods

Part III: Telchur and Rudd

By Andy Miller
Illustrated by Rebecca Guay



In this ultimate installation of "The Oeridian Lesser Gods," the Master of the North Wind and Lady Luck reveal a few of their secrets as well as the practices of their worshipers. Like many chaotic powers, each of these gods of the GREYHAWK® setting has both a kind and a cruel aspect.

TELCHUR

(Father Frost, The Ice Man, The Frostbite Lord, Walker of the Wastes, Master of the North Wind)
Lesser Power of Pandemonium, CN

Portfolio: Winter, cold, north wind
Aliases: None
Domain Name: Pandesmos/The Icicle Palace
Superior: Velnius (father)
Allies: None
Foes: Atroa, Sotillon
Symbol: Icicle
Worshiper's Alignment: Any Chaotic

Telchur (TELL-chur), the first son of Velnius, was left in charge of the world for a short time (only a millennium) while his father saw to other things and other worlds in Greyspace. When Velnius returned to Oerth, he found that his son had frozen it in an eternal winter. Angry, Velnius made three siblings for the young god and put them in charge of regulating the seasons with their brother.

Telchur is the god of winter. He is the North Wind, the Bringer of Famine and Death. He kills crops with an early frost and freezes animals in cold barns and pastures, all with random abandon. He is the angry, spoiled son who defied his father and never accepted the punishment for it.

Telchur receives prayers from those who genuinely love the silent beauty of the snow, as well as from those who simply want to appease the god and fear his wrath. He is exactly as the winter wind: often blowing without warning but, in the same vein, sometimes covering the world with beauty.

Telchur's Avatar (Fighter 25, Mage 15)

Telchur appears as a very tall, muscular man. His face is grayish-white, looking much like someone suffering from severe frostbite. His white beard and mustache are frozen into great icicles that hang from his face, cracking and breaking whenever he speaks. He wears many furs, also covered in a thin layer of ice that breaks and falls from the god in a neverending shower as he moves. His boots are covered with fur and ice, although this doesn't seem to affect his movement. His eyes are light blue, like the sky after a snowstorm.

Telchur carries a great battle-ax as tall as he is and apparently made out of solid ice. A great club of seasoned bronzewood hangs on his belt by his right hand, and he wears a broadsword strapped on his left side.

AC –5; MV 15, FL 36; hp 200; THAC0 –7; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+12 (battle-ax) or 1d6+9 (club) or 2d4+10 (broadsword); MR 60%; SZ L (8' tall); Str 20, Dex 18, Con 25, Int 19, Wis 18, Chr 10
Spells: W: 5/5/5/5/5/2/1/
Saves PPDM 3, RSW 5, PP 4, BW 4, Sp 6

Special Att/Def: Telchur usually attacks with Vexxin ("Frigid" in Old Oeridian), his *battle-ax +4, frost brand (+8 vs. fire-using/dwelling creatures).* Anyone struck with this weapon must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or suffer 4d8 points of cold damage (half with successful saving throw). The *ax* can also project a *cone of cold* once per round for 8d8 points of damage (half if a saving throw vs. spell succeeds) although Telchur rarely uses this feature as he prefers a toe-to-toe fight. Telchur's *club +1* (called *Tla*, or "Snow" in Old Oeridian) is also a cold weapon, inflicting extra cold damage as the *ax* does; it can also create a *wall of ice* once every 3 rounds. The *broadsword +2* is called *Issai* ("Ice" in Old Oeridian) and can cast a variation of *hold person* that freezes a person in place by covering the victim in a sheet of ice if a saving throw vs. spells fails. If this victim is not immediately warmed and the ice not melted or chipped away, the victim freezes to death in 10 rounds.

Telchur can blow an icy *gust of wind* once every round in addition to his other attacks. Those struck by his cold breath suffer 10d6 points of cold damage if they fail saving throws vs. spell. Telchur can create an *ice storm* that lasts as long as he wills it, is impervious to all forms of cold, and has control of the weather around him, creating storms or even blizzards at will. He can lower the temperature to far below freezing in a matter of seconds, even on a sunny day. In all but the warmest of climates, the fallen ice from his clothing soon covers the ground around him, requiring Dexterity checks from everyone but the Ice Man every round of combat. Failure indicates that the unfortunate has fallen and must spend the following round getting back up. One of Telchur's favorite tactics is to center an *ice storm* on himself while he fights, suffering no damage but hurting his enemies.

Other Manifestations

Telchur sometimes makes his presence known by a particularly harsh storm. He is also thought to be near whenever snow falls out of season or frost comes early. Sometimes, the icy face of a bearded man forms in the frost on windows or even the falling snow, telling followers what the Frostbite Lord wishes of them.

The Church

Clergy: Clerics, specialty priests, shamans
Clergy's Alignment: CN, CG, CE
Turn Undead: C: yes if good, SP: yes if good, Sh: yes if good
Command Undead: C: yes if evil, SP: yes if evil, Sh: yes if evil

The church of Telchur is most active in the northern countries that have the most to fear from the cold. Worship of the Ice Man is prevalent in the Wolf and Tiger Nomads' lands, while token worship takes place in the barbarian states. Permanent temples to Telchur exist only in the North Province and Blackmoor.

Constructed temples to Father Frost are large, imposing structures, usually without windows. These buildings are built to withstand the cold, and fireplaces

are prevalent in them. Furs, heavy rugs, and blankets are used to help insulate the walls, floors, and the people inside. Weather permitting, a large ice statue of the god is usually sculpted during the winter months on a special platform that is always built over the door.

Natural temples to the Walker of the Wastes are found out of doors. These are usually caves or natural windbreaks formed in the falling snow or frozen ice. These temples are never warm, as the use of flames is forbidden in such structures. They usually last only through the winter months, though a few in the Land of Black Ice are said to exist year round.

The church is divided into two main sects: those who worship the Frostbite Lord and the cold he brings, and those who simply seek to appease him with worship and try to stave off his wrath. The natural temples are the usual worshiping places of the former of these two groups, while the larger, more civilized temples are the province of the latter. Shamans, typically nomads or barbarians, also make up the former group, while the church's clerics fill the ranks of the latter.

Specialty priests are relatively new to the clergy of Telchur, appearing only in the last 300 years. Supposedly, a lone priest came from the Land of Black Ice around 294 C.Y. and began spreading his teachings; today, they number fewer than one hundred. The priests embrace both philosophies of the church: loving the cold yet also protecting the people against it. They tend to be accepted by both the shamans and the clerics.

Dogma: The church teaches that the cold is inevitable, even as the cycles of the year are ever turning. Winter always comes again, and it is best to be prepared. The church is split on exactly how this is accomplished.

The more "civilized" sect of the church believes that preparations include the gathering of wood and food, as well as the readying of shelter. Granted, this cannot be done year round, but when the first cool breaths of the Ice Man come, it is best to make ready for his arrival. Those who do not make at least a token effort to prepare for the onslaught deserve whatever comes to them.

Those shamans who worship the Master of the North Wind believe that the only way to prepare for the coming of the cold is to inure oneself against it. These men and women walk barefoot in the snow, toughening themselves against winter and the day when they will bask in the presence of the Frostbite Lord forever. Many of them die and are seen as heroes by the others. Some are horribly crippled by frostbite and gangrene. Still, a few manage to strengthen themselves to the point of being able to resist the cold completely. These are the few who tend the natural temples of Telchur and worship the god in his own element.

The new specialty priests believe both doctrines. Their immunity to cold makes them revered by the shamans, yet their enjoyment of warmth also grants them the acceptance of the clerics.

Day-to-Day Activities: On cold days, priests spend a great deal of time outside, communing with their god and contemplating the nature of winter. The gathering of wood for fires is important during the winter months, as is the salting and preparing of meat in the autumn. During snowstorms, good priests of Telchur tend to the sick and injured, sometimes braving the weather to help those in need.

The shamans of Telchur spend their summers in sweaty agony, often bathing in cool springs. They spend the winter months trying to read messages and see visions in the fall of snow or the pattern of frost on windows or walls. Although they recognize the need to stay warm, some of them ignore it in an attempt to better serve Telchur. Those who cannot endure the cold are considered weak.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: Winter is the most important time of the year to these priests. The only holy days that are celebrated yearly by the church are the seven days of the first week of Fireseek, considered by most to be the coldest time of the year. It is then that the priests are most often out of their temples, roaming the wastes. Blizzards are also sacred to the clergy of Telchur, and the priests often roam outside on the worst of days. Some venture into the wilderness to help those who become trapped in the weather, while others simply love the wild frenzy of such storms. Evil priests of the church search for sacrifices: helpless people lost in the storm, whose last hope ends up killing them.

Major Centers of Worship: The greatest remaining temple to Telchur stands in Blackmoor. (The magnificent Iceminster in Kaport Bay in the North Province was torn down by the people for firewood in the Winter of 246 C.Y.) Though few outside that country have ever seen it, it is rumored to be a great structure of stone, with walls some 10 feet thick. The Frost Palace, as the temple is known, is built completely of white marble and is a glorious achievement. It lies 45 leagues east of the city of Dantredun, on the edge of the Cold Marsh, only about 10 leagues from the ruined city of Blackmoor.

Another sight believed to be a holy place to Telchur and for which his priests have been searching for over 450 years, is the Hanging Glacier of Alisedran. This structure, found in 113 C.Y. by the explorer after whom it is named, supposedly lies somewhere in the Corusk Mountains. Though the priests of Telchur still search for it, the barbarians of the Thillonrian Peninsula bear them no great love and have made the search a fruitless one to date.

Affiliated Orders: There are no orders affiliated with the Temple of Telchur.

Priestly Vestments: Clergy of Telchur wear no distinctive vestments. In reverence to their deity, they often wear their hair long and have beards (if they are male). All wear furs in the coldest of winters, inside or out. The most prized furs come from the great beasts of the north and are exclusively white.

In the warmer months, priests of Telchur wear loose, white robes, usually

made of a light material. These men and women are not as accustomed to the heat as they are to the cold, though they always keep their arms and legs covered.

Adventuring Garb: Priests of Telchur dress for the weather, usually wearing furs, mittens, earmuffs, fur hats, and boots. In the warmer months, many still wear fur hats when outdoors. They tend to sunburn easily, so they strive to keep the sun off their faces, arms, and legs.

Specialty Priests (Guardians of the Cold)

Requirements: Constitution 17
Prime Requisites: Wisdom, Constitution
Alignment: CN
Weapons: Any
Armor: Any (non-metal preferred)
Major Spheres: All, Combat, Elemental (air), Necromantic, Protection, Sun, Weather
Minor Spheres: Divination, Travelers
Required Proficiencies: Weather Sense
Bonus Proficiencies: Survival (arctic), Direction Sense

- The guardians of the cold are immune to normal cold and gain a +1 bonus to saving throws vs. magical cold.
- At 4th level, guardians can cast *gust of wind* once per day.
- At 6th level, guardians can cast *wall of ice* once per day.
- At 8th level, guardians can cast *ice storm* once per day.
- At 10th level, guardians can cast *cone of cold* once per day.
- At 15th level, guardians can cast *uncontrollable weather* (from the *Tome of Magic*) once per day, but only in warm weather. Creating warm spots earns them the wrath of Telchur.

RUDD

(Luckbringer, Lady Luck, The Laughing Goddess, Smiley, Queen of Cards)
Demipower of Ysgard, CN(CG)

Portfolio: Chance, good luck, skill
Aliases: Blue Eyes, "That girl that wins all the time," Cheater, Card Shark
Domain Name: Ysgard/The House of Cards
Superior: Norebo (Papa)
Allies: Norebo, Trithereon, Zuoken, Zagyg
Foes: Ralishaz, Iuz
Symbol: Open hand of five cards
Worshiper's Alignment: CN, CG, N

Rudd (RUD) is a relatively young goddess. She was born almost a millennium ago. (The year 601 C.Y. will mark her 1,000th birthday.) It is said she was born in Bissel, but no one knows for sure. The goddess wandered the world after that, getting into trouble and finding that she loved skilled games of chance.

Rudd is the Great Gambler, and she knows every game of cards ever conceived. She delights in games of chance but prefers having some control as well, not liking purely random games like dice or wickets. She also avoids cerebral games such as Dragonchess, Tyingstones, and Sink Mr. Turtle, finding them far too easy. Her favorite games are cards and backgammon, as well as any game of skill that has some kind of random element involved in it.

Many claim to have met the goddess, and either she or her avatar often roam the Flanaess, finding games of chance and skill wherever she goes. She once freqented the gambling houses of the Wild Coast, or so the stories go, and more than one man has claimed he crossed cards with her in the city of Greyhawk. These are likely true, as she loves mortals and the games they play, though she does not abide cheating unless it is expertly done—and never if the cheater is caught. (She always catches those who try to cheat her.) She sometimes appears to those who think they are unbeatable in a specific game that involves both chance and skill.

Rudd does not get along with Istus, as she does not believe in a set fate or destiny for any individual.

Rudd's Avatar (Thief 20, Fighter 15, Mage 10, Cleric 15)

Rudd appears to be a young woman with short black hair. She has bright blue eyes and is invariably smiling, showing off perfect white teeth. Her skin is only slightly tanned and she has the best features of both the Oeridian and the Suel. She is impeccably dressed in flashy clothes, usually wearing pants instead of a dress and looking like some kind of swashbuckler. She wears a rapier and a

stiletto on her belt, although tries to use these weapons as little as possible.

AC –4; MV 12; HP 160; THAC0 6; #AT 2 or 10 (cards); Dmg 1d6+6 (rapier) and 1d4+4 (stiletto) or 1d4+2 (×10); MR 45%; SZ M (5'3" tall); Str 17, Dex 21, Con 20, Int 23, Wis 18, Chr 20
Spells: P: 8/8/7/7/4/2/1
W: 4/4/3/2/2
Saves PPDM 4, RSW 6, PP 5, BW 4, Sp 7

Special Att/Def: Rudd's *rapier +4* is called simply *Keleshe* ("Needle" in old Oeridian), and she often fights with both it and her *stiletto +3*. She also carries a deck of cards on her person and can magically enchant them (or any cards, for that matter) using them as *shuriken +2* and casting out as many as ten in a round. If she has a full deck of cards, she can fan it out and toss the whole deck at once. These cards fly from her hands and spin around a single individual, acting as a *hold person* spell. If the first victim makes a successful saving throw vs. spell, the cards randomly pick a second target hostile to the goddess and attack him or her the following round until someone is finally caught. The cards continue to hold those captured until Rudd wills them to cease, though she usually does so only if someone picks a random card named by Rudd out of the whirlwind that surrounds the victim. This can be a time-consuming process, as the first card must be returned to the vortex before a second can be drawn.

Rudd is skilled at fighting (and almost everything else). She is considered to have all proficiencies and can pick up any small object, check its balance, and use it as an effective weapon, sometimes fighting whole battles with chairs or salt and pepper shakers. Her touch on such items imbues them with the ability to act as +5 weapons with regard to striking creatures. Legend has it that she once fought off an army of tanar'ri using only a stack of books and a potted plant.

Finally, the goddess is incredibly lucky. Any attack roll, damage, ability check, or saving throws should be rolled twice for the goddess and the most favorable result taken. This luck follows Rudd around as she gambles as well—and any games of chance she plays should be handled in the same manner. For example, if she is playing a game of cards, she receives the most favorable of two deals.

Other Manifestations

Rudd is thought to be nearby or watching over those who receive two perfect hands of cards in a row (such as two royal flushes in poker). Sometimes she is thought to be near when extra cards appear in the deck, although those using this as an excuse or denial when they cheat might find themselves visited by the goddess. Rudd sometimes likes to animate face cards (most often the Queen), having them wink and leer at card holders and cheaters.

The Church

Clergy: Cleric, Specialty Priests, Bards
Clergy's Alignment: CN, CG
Turn Undead: C: no, SP: no, B: no
Command Undead: C: no, SP: no, B: no

Rudd has only a small following, mostly Oeridians or partial Oeridians. Her clergy have been reported in Ull and Ekbir (where she spent a great deal of time in the early years of her life), the Wild Coast, Bissel, the Bandit Kingdoms (before Iuz), and the Urnst States. Her name is often called upon by any who play games that are not pure luck. Sometimes small booths are dedicated to her outside or near gambling houses.

There are no large temples to Rudd. Places of worship are often small, well-built shrines.

The clergy of the church are loosely organized, usually frequenting gambling houses (though those that are recognized as followers of the demigod are sometimes refused admittance). These men and women roam the lands in search of the perfect game—and sometimes look for Rudd herself.

Dogma: Rudd's most important philosophy is to make one's own luck. Her priests preach that skill is as important as good luck and far easier to obtain in the long run. They disdain anything that is purely chance. They do not abide cheating but secretly teach that if you can cheat and get away with it, you have not actually cheated but simply made more of your own good luck.

Day-to-Day Activities: The priests of Rudd are most often found in gambling houses, using their skills to make money for the church and themselves. For a small fee, they teach the rudiments of games of skill and chance. Some of the more virtuous clergy have made a point of seeking out gambling dens to reveal those who cheat their patrons. Others enjoy a game of horseshoes or bowling, and they teach these games to others.

All of the clergy hone what skills they have with an almost fanatic intensity, believing that being the best at something makes them worthy of serving Rudd. They generally find what they are best at and work at it until they are even better—then work at it some more. Only the priests of Zuoken are more devoted to such perfection.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: Some priests celebrate the 10th day of Planting as Rudd's birthday (long ago). Although this is not an official holiday of the church, priests of Rudd in Bissel often recognize it.

Major Centers of Worship: The largest and finest shrine to Rudd is in the Crossed Blades Gambling Hall in the city of Peacekeep, on the south border of Bissel. The gambling house itself is run by the priests of the church, and a small shrine to Rudd sits in the outermost chamber, often visited by those who find their luck running low. With the invasion and subjugation of Bissel by Ket, these priests fear that their temple and their livelihood may be in jeopardy.

Affiliated Orders: The church usually works closely with the church of Norebo and the luckholders of that temple.

Priestly Vestments: Clergy of Rudd always wear expensive, bright-colored clothing of the latest fashion. They often have wide sleeved shirts and wide brimmed hats with lots of feathers, imitating how their goddess dresses as much as possible. Their clothing is always well mended and clean. They prominently display their holy symbol at their throat or on their hats.

Adventuring Garb: Priests wear much the same clothing as the clergy, although it is usually even flashier (though never gaudy). Knee boots are common.

Specialty Priests (Luckdealers)

Requirements: Charisma 14
Prime Requisites: Wisdom, Charisma
Alignment: CN, CG
Weapons: Any but the very large (rapier and stiletto first)
Armor: Any (leather preferred)
Major Spheres: All, Chaos, Charm, Combat, Numbers, Thought, Time
Minor Spheres: Divination
Required Proficiencies: None
Bonus Proficiencies: Gambling

- Halflings, elves, dwarves, and gnomes are all allowed to be luckdealers. Rudd loves them all.
- Luckdealers are allowed to take the swashbuckler kit if they so choose as either a fighter or thief.
- Luckdealers have the ability to specialize as a swashbuckler, gaining two bonus proficiency slots that must be devoted to proficiency with one of the following weapons: stiletto, main-gauche, rapier, and sabre. Throughout his or her career, the luckdealer must devote half of his or her weapon proficiency slots to these four weapons. Once the luckdealer has achieved proficiency with all four, he or she may distribute proficiency slots as desired. (For more information on specialization and these weapons, see *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*.)
- At 4th level, luckdealers can cast *Nahal's reckless dweomer* once per day.
- At 8th level, luckdealers have the ability to cast *luck* (opposite of unluck in the *Tome of Magic*) once per day.

Andy's favorite of the Oeridian Lesser Gods is Delleb, though Rudd is the one he'd most like to meet.

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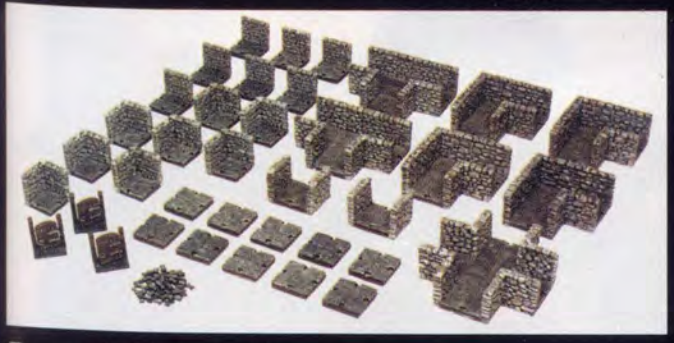

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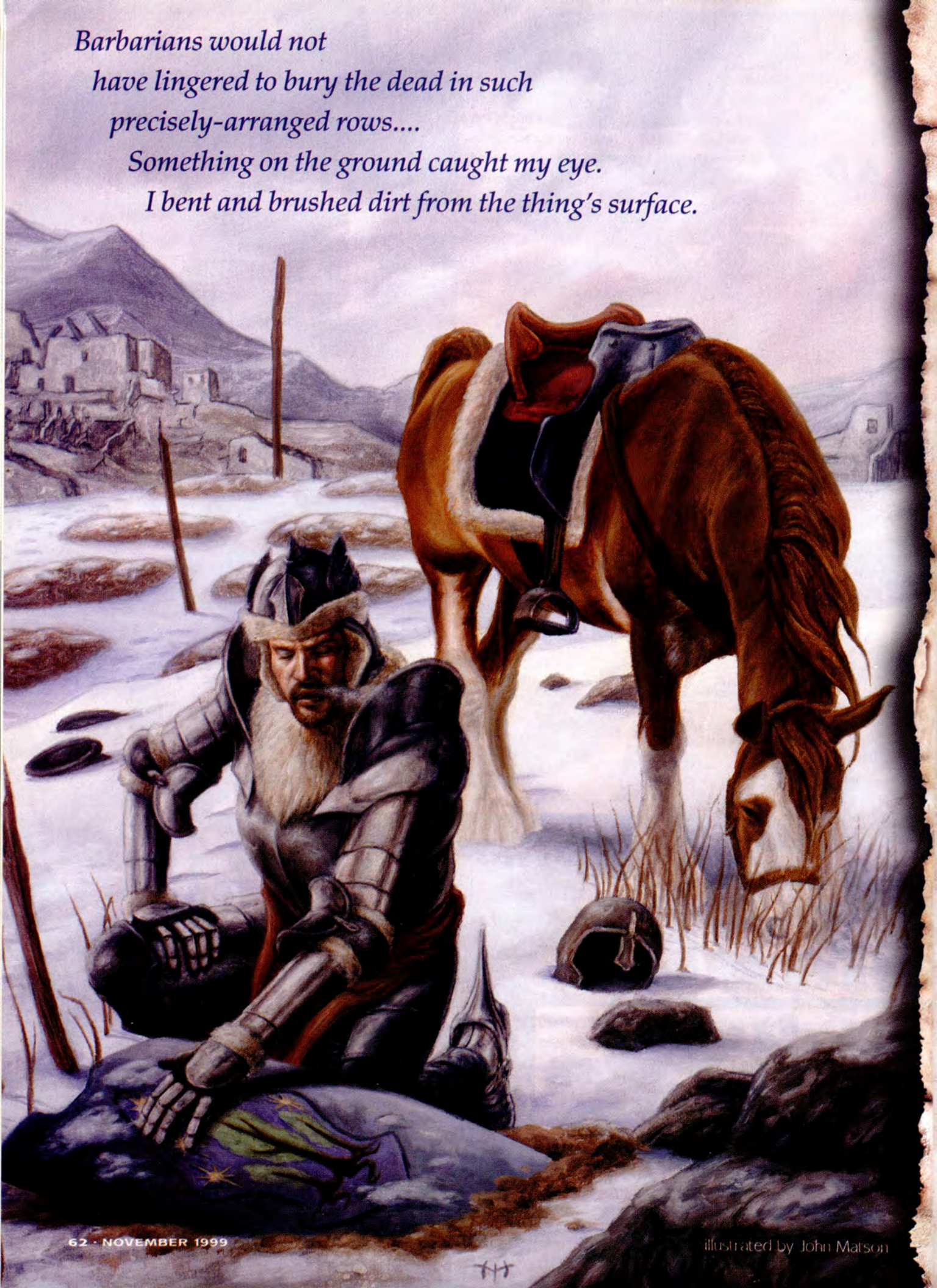
Barbarians would not
have lingered to bury the dead in such
precisely-arranged rows....
Something on the ground caught my eye.
I bent and brushed dirt from the thing's surface.



illustrated by John Matson

Fiction by
Mark Anthony

The King of Winter

"It will be a cold winter," old Yarrow said.

He gazed with age-dimmed eyes at the runes scattered on the stone plate. I studied the pattern. True, I am no scholar, but I have more than a passing interest in the learned arts. Although books are rarer than honest men here in the farthest hinterlands of the empire, over the years—through good fortune and a fair sum of gold—I have come by more than a dozen codices on a variety of subjects, from history to philosophy to rhetoric. A soldier does well to keep his mind keen, not just his sword.

"How cold, Yarrow?" I asked. I gathered my cloak more closely about my shoulders. Outside, the world shone under an amber varnish of autumn sunlight, but the air coming through the chamber's narrow window bore a sharp edge to it.

"Snow for five months and frost for seven," the old man said in his cracked voice. "Cold the likes of which has not been known in a year of years will clutch the land. Ancient trees, lords of the forest, will splinter in its grip."

"And the river?"

The runespeaker's pock-scarred face grew grim. "The Dimduorn will freeze. Of this the runes tell clearly. For days on end the river will stand as stone."

I picked up one of the bone runes. In all my years as commander of the Tarrasian garrison at Theysa, I had never known Yarrow's runespeakings to prove false. True, it was a barbarian craft, no doubt far beneath the high art of augury employed in the temples of Tarras. But the runic crafts had been practiced in Malachor before its fall. If runes had been good enough for the great lords of that kingdom, certainly they were good enough for the likes of me.

"They will cross it, Dor Calavus," Yarrow said, his voice quavering now. "The Thanadain—surely they will cross the Dimduorn when it freezes."

"I know, Yarrow." I set down the rune. "The barbarians will come."

I turned from the old man and crossed the stone room that had housed the commanders of this garrison for centuries. On a table lay scattered sheets of paper. I picked up the topmost sheaf, the words upon it half-finished. A missive—my fifth to Tarras that year. But then, this was not the first time Yarrow's runes had foretold trouble.

That spring, at the festival of Jorus, the runes had spoken of upheavals to come. Although these had been unnamed at that point, I had heeded Yarrow's warning and had penned a letter to Tarras. Only now it was autumn, and after three more missives to the empire's capital city, no help had come. All of my requests for reinforcements had gone unanswered.

But why? I didn't know. Perhaps none of my riders had made it all the way south to Tarras. After all, no one from Theysa had journeyed there in decades. Not even I. Nor did it matter now. I set the paper down. It was too late to call for help.

A shuffling behind me. "If the Thanadain cross the river, we cannot hold them, Dor Calavus."

"We have held them at the bridge for years, Yarrow."

I did not need to see him to know he shook his head.

"At the bridge they can fight but ten abreast, and the sticks they fletch for arrows have no teeth for shields of good Tarrasian iron. But when the Dimduorn freezes, they will come at us not ten abreast but a thousand—nay, five thousand, their flesh white like the snow, and naked as if they feel not the bite of the cold, wielding swords as pale as frost."

I turned toward the bone-thin man. "Don't tell me you saw all of that in your runes."

Yarrow trembled inside his gray robe, although whether from fear or age I could not tell. "I do not need runes to tell me this. It is clear for all to see. Tarras will not come. The emperor has forgotten us."

"That is not so!" My voice was more angry than I intended—perhaps because Yarrow's words echoed my own fears.

Silence filled the room, then the distant trilling of one last thrush outside the window, singing to the waning sun.

"There is … there is another who can help us, Dor Calavus."

The call of the thrush ceased. My eyes narrowed. "Who?" I said. However, I knew what he was going to say before he uttered the words. I had heard the stories whispered in the village below the garrison.

"The witch of the vale."

I snorted. "There is no witch in the valley, Yarrow. Even if there were, we need a thousand soldiers to aid us, not one mad hag. We will find a way to fight on our own."

Yarrow's knobby shoulders slumped. "But you cannot fight ice, Dor Calavus. Even the mightiest of stones must crack under its hold." He gestured to the plate of runes.

The King of Winter

"Winter is against us in this. Without help, we cannot win."

Outside the window, the sun vanished. Blue shadows stole into the chamber, as dim as deep ice. I gazed at the runes and shuddered.

Three days later, just after a cold, red dawn, I set out on horseback from the garrison to find the witch.

It was foolishness, of course. No doubt Vathris Bullslayer, whose mysteries I followed when time allowed, would frown on what I was doing. He was the god of warriors, a lover of blood and battle, and he cared little for tricks or magic.

I snorted in unison with my horse, our breath forming white clouds on the air. Perhaps that was my problem. Perhaps I needed to be less a scholar and more a warrior. I slipped a gloved hand to the sword at my hip, its grip polished by the hands and sweat of three generations. My snort became a sigh.

Often over the years, I had wished that I possessed my father's height, or his father's bulk and muscle. Instead I was slight as my mother had been, with her quick, slender hands. When I gazed into the polished silver mirror in my chamber, it was her dark eyes that gazed back at me, not his.

However, it was his sword I wore about my hip. From him the cloak of command had passed to my shoulders, and I had no choice but to wear it. Not that this was how it should be—the garrison command was not meant to be a hereditary position. But we did the best we could, given that no relief had come from Tarras in nearly half a century.

When I reached the base of the garrison's hill, I turned west, toward the dim mouth of a valley I could now just glimpse between two distant hills. Something told me the emperor would appreciate what I was doing as little as Vathris. Both ruler and god seemed to have forgotten the cold lands of the north. Instead they dozed in the spice-soaked air along the shores of the Summer Sea, and I had an army of ten thousand hungry barbarians to keep from crossing the ice.

It was nearing midmorning when a mound hove before me, rising from the sere landscape in a perfect circle. I brought my horse to a halt, then dismounted at the foot of the mound.

I could still recall in crisp detail the day my mother brought me to this place, although I could not have been more than seven winters old. She had spoken in soft tones of those who had fought here against the minions of the Pale King, during the War of the Stones long ago. All who had fallen had been buried in this place. Gazing up at the great mound, both then and now, I could not imagine the number that had perished. Was victory worth so many lives?

But had the Pale King won—and by all the tales he nearly did win—Falengarth would have fallen under ice and shadow forever. And if the Thanadain crossed the Dimduorn? Perhaps it would not be so dire as the rule of the Pale King, but it would herald the end of our world—the Tarrasian world—just the same.

The wind hissed through dead grass. Above, thin clouds sliced across the colorless sky like pale knives. For another moment I gazed at the mound, thinking of the stories my mother had told me—stories of the Pale King, and the Old Gods, and the Little People. And of witches. As a child I had believed them all. And now?

Well, the Pale King was real—the mound proved that. As for the rest, I supposed I would find out. I turned to mount again—

—and halted. I thought it odd my horse had not stamped or snorted. Instead the beast placidly nosed the withered grass, searching for a still-tender sprout. A lithe form moved past, clad in a cloak the color of the late autumn land, then lifted slender hands and pushed back the cloak's hood.

A gasp escaped my lips. Even before I took in her visage—cheeks high, emerald eyes bright, smooth skin tawny from sun and wind—I knew who she must be. She was no hag, this one.

"How?" I murmured. "How did you know I was looking for you?"

It seemed she whispered to me, although her lips did not move.

Am I not a witch, Calavus of Tarras?

In that moment the air around me was as warm and golden as springtime. Then the words faded from my mind, and the gray chill closed around me again. I blinked. Had I imagined the voice?

She laughed, displaying white teeth. Her hair was the color of wheat. "You're cold," she said. "Come."

The witch lead me to a hollow on the far side of the mound. A campfire blazed. Why had I not seen the smoke earlier? I didn't know, but when she gestured for me to sit I did so and was glad for the warmth.

She took a pot from the coals and filled two clay cups with dark, steaming liquid. No witch's brew this, but instead good, rich *maddok*. I drank and felt a tingling infuse me. Maddok was a barbarian drink, and I knew it was frowned upon by the higher classes of Tarras, but it was one outland custom I had willingly accepted. What ability I had to command the garrison would have vanished were it not for my morning pot of the stuff.

Only as I set down the cup did I realize she was staring at me. I shifted under her gaze, but this was foolish. Maddok drinker or no, I was Tarrasian and a man of logic. I would not believe she had magic.

Then why did you come seeking me, Dor Calavus?

I dropped the cup as the voice—*her* voice—whispered again in my mind. So much for trusty Tarrasian logic.

"You know my name," I said, throat tight.

"Your mother came to me once. I gave her a simple of herbs to help quicken the womb. Nine moons later, you were born."

I scowled at her. "But you could not have met my mother before I was born. I am three-and-thirty winters. And by your look you have fewer years than I."

Again she laughed. "Do I, Calavus?"

I opened my mouth, then stopped. Something told me I did not want to know the answer to that question.

"What have you come to say to me, Calavus?"

"What? Don't you already know?"

"I do. You wonder whether Tarras will yet come before the Dimduorn freezes."

I leaned closer, ignoring the heat of the fire. "And will they? Will Tarras come?"

The witch seemed to think. I wondered if I had called her bluff—if now that I had asked she would be forced to admit she had no true magic, only tricks. At last she nodded.

"I will show you Tarras. Then you may judge for yourself."

"What do you mean?"

She gestured to the fire. "Look. And see."

I followed her motion with my eyes but saw only embers glowing amid the dancing flames. I began to turn away. Then, as if the flames had become a window of crimson glass, I saw images through the fire.

A city stood on cliffs above an azure sea: high arches, slender columns, soaring domes blazing with gold. I had never been there, but in my heart I knew it. Tarras.

It was huge—so much greater than I imagined. Like a bird I soared over the web of its streets, its houses, its temples, its markets and palaces without number. My heart thrilled. How could I ever have doubted the might of my empire?

"If one fights fire with fire, then you must fight frost with frost."

I drew closer, and my stomach clenched. What had seemed white and serene from far above resolved into crowded filth and squalor. The white columns were soiled. The gold domes peeled and cracked. Throngs of unwashed people crowded the streets. They ate sweets and burnt meat and laughed at the crude entertainments of pock-faced jesters, or watched as dogs were pitted in fights to the death, tearing at one another with their teeth until blood ran. Or sometimes it was men, not dogs.

Sickened, I tried to pull away. Instead I was drawn toward a sprawling building, its shaded colonnades surrounding tiled courtyards and marbled fountains. A banner soared above it, gaudy yet faded: the three trees and five stars of Tarras. The emperor's palace. Gilded doors opened before me, and I drifted into a vast, domed hall.

No, I whispered, but I had no voice, nor eyes to close to shut out the vision. Like a sea of flesh, naked bodies writhed on the floor of the throneroom. Above, on a dais, a lumpy man wearing the gilded *ithaya* leaf crown of the emperor looked on, his leering visage dull but not sated, wine red as blood dribbling down his chin.

"No!"

This time I did cry out. I plunged my gloved fist into the fire. Sparks crackled on the air, and I jerked my hand back. The words burned my throat as I spoke to them. "What is this lie you have shown me, witch?"

Her words were cool and simple as rain. "It is no lie."

I clenched my scorched fist. Had I not already known that it was so? Why else had all my missives gone unanswered? "So the emperor will never send aid. We are lost."

"No, Calavus. Tarras is lost. It was lost centuries ago. You are not."

A gentle touch on my arm. I looked up. I had not seen her draw close to me.

"What's the difference?" I said. "Why should we fight? We are nothing now. Men without an empire."

"Then *give* them an empire." Her words were soft yet pricked my heart. "You will rule a great land, Calavus. If you choose. I have seen it in the flames."

I pressed my eyes shut. Her words were tempting, but this was madness. I was the unappointed commander of an outland Tarrasian garrison. I was no emperor.

I opened my eyes. "And what of you, witch? What have you seen for yourself in the fire?"

She turned away. "It is best not to look to the flames for one's own fate."

I had no answer for that.

The witch turned back. "There is yet help for you in your battle, Dor Calavus—a treasure of the War of the Stones. Seek for it in this place, here were the ancients slumber."

I shook my head. "What is it?"

"If one fights fire with fire, then you must fight frost with frost."

Her words meant nothing to me. I laughed so that I would not weep. "And what payment do you wish for this great gift?"

She rose to her feet. "Only this, Calavus. That when you rule your land as I have seen, you swear never to harm or cast out the crones and hags and workers of healing, whatever your followers might say. Do you swear this?"

I stood and gazed on her radiant face. It was absurd. I had no land to cast others out of. All the same I spoke the words. "I swear it."

The witch smiled. She lifted a slender hand and touched my cheek. "The flames cannot lie. You *will* rule, Calavus. And you will make a place for my sisters. I have seen it."

Before I could answer, the campfire flared upward, its glare blinding me. Then the flames died down, and I saw that I was alone.

Three weeks later, winter came to Theysa on the same day Tarras did.

I stood atop the outer wall of the garrison just as snow began to fall from a hard iron sky and watched the line of soldiers march along the Tarras road. Before them rode twenty men on black horses, and behind came a long train of mule-drawn carts burdened with supplies. Despite the bleakness of the day, I laughed. The emperor had not forgotten us after all.

True, it was only three companies that marched toward the garrison, with no more in sight. Three hundred men, plus the twenty mounted. However, these were men of Tarras—small and dark-haired like me, but proud and muscular. Their breastplates shone like the sun above the Summer Sea. Surely one warrior of Tarras was worth five wild Thanadain.

My eyes moved to the horizon, but I could not see the burial mound for the thickening snow. Not that it mattered. The witch's magic had been wrong—if she had any magic at all.

And if she did not have magic, then how do you explain what you saw in the fire, Calavus?

A trick, then. Or herbs stirred into my maddok. It did not matter. Tarras had come, and at that moment I cared little about the workings of witches.

"Sound the horns, Garius," I said to the young soldier beside me. "Let the gates be opened."

Garius nodded and dashed off.

I left the wall and headed to my chamber, where I donned my good cloak and my father's sword. As I turned to go, motion caught my eye. I paused, gazing back at the dim shadow of a man who stared from the polished silver mirror in the corner of the room. He was dressed in Tarrasian fashion, and his eyes and hair were as dark as any who dwelled in southern lands. But there was something about him—the paleness of his skin, the high, sharp edges of his cheeks—that spoke of colder lands.

"That's foolish, Calavus," I murmured. "You're as Tarrasian as any man of the empire."

Wasn't I?

Your mother came to me once....

I moved to the room's table. From beneath a heap of papers I pulled a small box. It fit easily in one hand, but it was heavy, fashioned of iron. Its surface might once have borne writing or symbols, but long burial had corroded them beyond legibility. Prying the rusted box open for the first time had been no easy feat, but now, well-oiled, the lid lifted without effort.

The witch had been right about one thing, I would give the madwoman that—there had indeed been something beneath the burial mound from the War of the Stones. How she had known it was there I could not guess, for it was not easily found, and then only by blind luck.

It was a week after I met the witch that I returned to the mound. I had told myself it was to see if she spoke truth, if there really was something to be discovered. However, I think it was not an artifact of Malachor I hoped to find. For all that week, each time I slept, I dreamed of eyes like green emeralds peering at me over dancing flames.

All day I clambered over the surface of the mound, sinking a shovel here and there. By sunset I had nothing to show for it save a good set of blisters and filthy clothes. It was only then, as I descended the mound, that my boot found what my eyes had missed: a small sink hole hidden by a patch of weeds. Even as I groped in the hole to free my boot, my fingers brushed against something far too square to be a rock.

Now, as I had a dozen times since finding the box at the burial mound, I stared at the object within. It was a disk of creamy stone, just slightly larger than a Tarrasian coin. Incised into its surface was a silvery symbol. I had not needed Yarrow to know it was a rune, but when I showed it to the old runespeaker even he did not know which rune it was or the nature of the artifact. I had bid him to find an answer to these questions, but as yet the old man had not returned.

Once again troubling thoughts came to me. How *had* the witch known I would find this? But perhaps it was not such a mystery. After all, she had not said what it was I would find. And logic held that if one dug in an old burial mound all day, one was bound to find something.

"Dor Calavus?"

I closed my hand around the box and turned toward the door. The soldier Garius stood in the entrance.

"The reinforcements approach the gates, sir."

I nodded. "I'll be right there."

The soldier grinned. "It's like magic, isn't it, sir? Three Tarrasian companies marching out of the mist, bright and shining. It's as if they walked out of a story."

I smiled at him. "Yes. Just like that."

I slipped the box inside my jerkin, then stepped through the door to meet my fellow Tarrasians.

"Not bad, Dor Calavus," said Dor Virago, High Commander of the third sect of the fifth division of the Army of Tarras. "Not bad at all. I've seen outposts half this far from Tarras that aren't in half as good a shape. You've done well out here."

I smiled at the high commander, who stood next to me atop the outer wall. However, when he turned his gaze to look down on the activity of the garrison, the expression faded from my lips. *If I've done so well, then why have you commanded your men to alter everything I've made here, Dor Virago?*

Belatedly, I scolded myself for this petty thought. Wasn't this what I had hoped for all these years—for Tarras to come with the men and supplies this garrison needed to survive?

True, some of Dor Virago's ways, and the ways of his men, were different than ours. A few of my soldiers had come to me over the last several days. They were troubled by Virago's brusque commands, or his tendency to slap a man with the flat of his sword if an order wasn't answered swiftly enough. And I had heard disturbing reports from the village, of young women being accosted by the new Tarrasian soldiers. However, when I spoke to Virago, he assured me no such incidents had occurred, and he reminded me of what I already knew—that simple folk tended to fear that which was not familiar to them.

"Come, Dor Calavus," Virago said, taking my elbow. "Let's go see how our men our faring."

The high commander smiled again, and this time it was hard not to respond.

On the frozen mud of the garrison's yard, twenty of my men sparred with twenty of Virago's, all using padded swords. My soldiers had learned to fight in the field, but many of them were young, and all lacked the formal training of the military schools of Tarras. They were, to be blunt, losing badly.

I winced as Mardug, one of my larger and more experienced warriors, flew past me and sprawled to the ground.

Virago clapped my shoulder. "Don't fear, Calavus. We'll turn your men into proper Tarrasians yet."

I eyed the sullen sky. Hard bits of ice fell from the clouds. *You had better hurry,* I wanted to say.

Motion caught my eye, and I saw Yarrow on the far side of the yard, clutching his gray robe around himself as he started toward me. Had the old man learned something about the artifact?

"I must say, Calavus, I had feared the worst on my journey here."

I blinked and turned toward Virago. "What?"

The high commander watched the sparring men. "While not all is as it should be here, you've kept true to the Tarrasian spirit. That hasn't been the case at all of the hinterland outposts I've visited. I've seen commanders who've gone vulgar."

"Gone vulgar?"

Virago nodded. "It's a terrible thing to see. Men who've forgotten their duty to Tarras, and who've taken to consorting with the barbarians—drinking their drink, wenching their women, working their petty magics and runes...."

I froze. Yarrow had nearly reached us. I lifted a hand part way and made a slicing motion.

Virago frowned. "Is something wrong, Calavus?"

Again I motioned to Yarrow. The old man cocked his head, then shrugged and turned away. I sighed as he vanished through a doorway.

"No," I said, "nothing's wrong. Your words just made me think of the Thanadain across the river. They are at least ten thousand, and we are but seven hundred."

Virago snorted. "Ten thousand, yes. But over two thirds of those will be old, or women, or children. Of the men who remain, they will attack but a few at a time, in bands of five hundred at the most. And when we defeat one band, the others will turn and flee. It is the way of barbarians." The high commander spat on the rock-hard ground. "They're just animals, you know."

I shivered. I was not so certain of that as Virago. Yet the high commander was an experienced warrior and had fought on many of the empire's fronts.

"I think we've seen enough here, Dor Calavus. Let's leave the cold to the men and have a cup of spiced wine."

I hesitated, loath to enjoy the warmth of indoors while my men worked out in the thickening snow. However, warm wine did sound good. I glanced at my soldiers, then turned and followed Virago into the garrison.

The next morning I left Theysa and rode east across frozen fields toward the village of Faxfarus.

Faxfarus was a day's trek from the garrison, and I was reluctant to go so far from Theysa. I had awakened that dawn to find the world white with frost. Some of my men reported seeing great chunks of ice floating on the surface of the Dimduorn, and across the river the smoke of Thanadain campfires rose into the still air like a forest of gray trees.

However, I had little choice but to go. A farmer had come to the garrison bearing ill rumors in addition to his cart of peat. He spoke of trouble in Faxfarus—although exactly what had happened he did not know. True, I might have sent one of my captains, as Dor Virago suggested, but that had never been my way. I preferred to see things with my own eyes rather than rely on the words of others.

The day grew colder rather than warmer as I rode across the empty land. The leaden sky sank lower, and sharp grains of ice hissed in all directions. From time to time, I slipped a hand inside my jerkin for warmth—and to feel the small disk of stone I had tucked there. Yarrow's words of the night before still echoed in my mind.

It is the work of the Runelords of old, Dor Calavus, and an artifact of great power. I did not recognize it at first, for it is inscribed in the archaic fashion. But I know now that it is Hadeth, *which is the rune of frost.*

Their twisted shapes scattered the village common, their half-rotted bodies now frozen solid.

Other words drifted into my mind as I recalled eyes as green as summer. *You must fight frost with frost....*

I didn't understand. What had she meant? However, the passing of the leagues brought no answers.

The day faded. At last, as a tincture of red colored the gray air, hinting at the setting sun I could not see, I rode into the shallow dell where the village of Faxfarus lay.

Where the village of Faxfarus *had* lain.

I brought my horse to an abrupt halt and slipped from the saddle. Shadows stalked among the ruins of the village, muting the edges of the destruction but not concealing it. No building had been left untouched. Most had burned, their stone chimneys reaching skyward like skeletal fingers. The twisted shapes of kine and pigs scattered the village common, their half-rotted bodies now frozen solid, their slit throats gaping open.

My boots crunched against the ground, then halted beside a barren patch of soil. I knelt, and before I could wonder what might have been buried here, something that glowed pale in the gloom caught my eye. I pried up a clump of iron-hard dirt, revealing the object beneath. It was small, slender, and perfect: the hand of a child.

With a cry I staggered to my feet. Only then did I see the other filled-in pits, all in line with the first. I grabbed at the bridle of my horse to keep from falling. Had the Thanadain managed to cross the river already?

But that didn't make sense. The barbarians would not have slain the farm animals but would have taken them instead. And they would not have lingered to bury the dead in such precisely arranged rows.

Something on the ground caught my eye. I bent and brushed dirt from the thing's surface. It was a shield forged of iron and wood. I snatched my hand back as a new cold gripped me, freezing my blood.

Emblazoned on the shield were three trees and five stars.

I reached Theysa at dawn. My horse staggered through the gates of the garrison. Sometime in the middle of the night I had finally let the poor beast rest. The delay had eaten at me, but the horse would have done me little good had its heart burst.

Now the sun crested the horizon, but its ruddy light did nothing to soften the crystalline air. There was no wind, no birdsong. Only a low groan that thrummed just beyond the edge of hearing and whose source I could not place. Yarrow had been right. Never had there been a cold like this in Theysa. However, I hardly felt the air's bite as I dismounted and marched into the garrison's yard.

Virago was waiting for me. He wore a smile on his handsome face, but his dark eyes were narrow. So he had known what I would find in Faxfarus.

"Why?" My voice was like the croak of a raven. "Why did you do it, Dor Virago?"

The high commander shrugged. "They refused hospitality for myself and my captains, Dor Calavus. We had to teach them a lesson."

I pressed my eyes shut, and in my mind I saw them: the folk of Faxfarus hiding in their crude houses, not understanding that these strange men were of the empire to which they themselves belonged—an empire they had heard of only in stories. Then came the swords, the fires, and the screams.

I opened my eyes. "And was this the only village that refused hospitality to you on your march from Tarras?"

Virago sighed and pressed his hand to his chest. "Sadly, it was not."

I clenched a fist. "By Vathris...."

"By Vathris it was done."

Virago stepped forward and gripped my shoulders, his handsome face inches from mine.

"Listen to me, Dor Calavus. Do not think this act was done out of pleasure or lust, for it was not. Rather it was done in the same way a soldier in the field cuts off his own gangrenous hand, knowing he must remove the part, precious as it is, lest the poison spread to the rest of his body."

I stared past him, not wanting to hear his words, although they pierced me like icicles all the same.

"The empire is like that body, Dor Calavus. Sometimes a rotten part must be excised that the whole might survive. What happened in that village is unfortunate, yes. But as others hear of it, they will choose to remember that they are part of the great empire of Tarras and not rulerless barbarians. In this way the empire—and its people—are preserved."

A sickness filled me, but with it also came the cold whisper of logic. Yes, it made sense. Sometimes a few must be punished to safeguard the many. I met Virago's eyes.

"Yes!" he said. "I see you understand, that you are a true man of Tarras. As I said, you have done well here in the outlands, Dor Calavus. But there is yet peril for you here, as I saw firsthand while you were gone."

My breath was a ghost on the air. "What do you mean?"

"A heathen woman came to the garrison yesterday, asking for you. She claimed to have news of the Thanadain, but no doubt what she truly sought was to ensnare you in her godless ways, to prevent your fighting her barbarian kindred. Then, when we took her in custody, one of your very own servants protested, revealing himself for a worker of runes and barbarian crafts."

Sickness flooded my chest. "*What?*"

He misread the horror on my visage. "Don't fear, Dor Calavus. We dealt with the two barbarian sympathizers. They will not trouble us now."

He gestured to the far side of the garrison's yard. I staggered past him, then gazed up at two ragged bundles hanging from poles I had not noticed before. Bile rose in my throat and froze there.

One was thin and bony, his gray robe smeared with dirt and blood. The other possessed hair golden as the dawn. However, her eyes, once green jewels, now bulged like dull stones amid the bloated oval of her face. Yarrow and the witch. Both of them had been hanged by their necks.

Frost stole into my heart. I felt neither sorrow nor rage. Instead I felt ... nothing. *Sometimes a rotten part must be excised that the whole might survive.*

Before I could find words to speak, the sound of a horn shattered the brittle air.

"The river has frozen!" a voice called from one of the garrison's walls. "The Thanadain come!"

A strong hand gripped my arm. "Come, Dor Calavus. Forget this crude wench and old bag of bones. Do not doubt that what we do is right. Glory awaits us. Once we defeat the barbarians, you shall journey to Tarras and present their king's head to the emperor himself."

I gazed at Dor Virago. He stood straight, his visage noble, his eyes clear of doubt. In every way he was a true Tarrasian—everything I had ever believed I should be. I turned my back on the two limp forms dangling from the poles, gripped my sword, and followed the high commander to battle.

We approached the river as one, four hundred men of Theysa and three hundred soldiers of Tarras. I rode beside Dor Virago beneath the golden banner of the empire. The high commander had announced that I was to help lead the combined force.

"Consider this your reward for all the years you've diligently stood guard here in these backwaters," Virago said as we rode. "Soon all in the empire will speak the name Calavus."

Still numb, I could not unclench my jaw, and I suppose he mistook my silence for agreement, for he grinned and spurred his mount on.

We halted at the top of the Dimduorn's south embankment, and a gasp of frigid air filled my lungs. Even knowing their numbers, I was not prepared for the horde of Thanadain that huddled on the far side of the frozen river. To an extent Dor Virago was right—only a fraction of the barbarians approached the rough surface of the Dimduorn. However, it was still far more than five hundred. Two thousand at least. Thrice our number.

Then again, they were clad in crude clothes and furs. They bore no shields, and I knew that their swords, while bright, would be as brittle as glass in this cold, unlike the tempered steel of Tarras. There was a chance. If we fought well, and cleverly, we could hold these barbarians back.

"We will crush them from both sides!" Virago's eyes shone. By Vathris, I think you're a true Tarasian after all."

I gazed at the Tarrasian soldiers around me, arranged in precise rows, clad in bright armor, and sudden pride surged in my chest. Were they not superior to the Thanadain in every way? And was I not one of them? Virago was right—it was time to forget fear and doubt. None would stand in the empire's way. What we did was right simply because we did it.

In that moment, I felt my heart grow strong and pure as ice, and I knew I was a true Tarrasian at last. Shoulders square, back straight, I wheeled my horse around to ride toward Virago.

"It was three gold marks, not two, Lenarus," a coarse voice said beside me.

"All right, you bastard of a bull. But I still don't know how you were so sure she would go first. The wench seemed strong, while the old coot looked like a breeze could knock him over. But he kept crying up there all blasted day."

"I knew she'd go quick. I could see it in her eyes when we strung her up. Her kind can't stand to be captured."

I pulled hard on the reins and stared at the two Tarrasian soldiers who stood a few paces off. Gold passed between rough fingers, then the men marched to join their companions. Pride and thoughts of glory fled me, replaced by anguish. In my chest, my heart melted, becoming a thing of warm, weak flesh once more.

A light touch on my knee. I glanced down at Mardug, one of my men. He wore a stricken look on his plain, bearded face.

"We tried to stop them, Dor Calavus. But they had hung poor old Yarrow before we even knew what they were doing. I don't know who the woman was. She said she came with a message for you."

"A message?"

Mardug nodded. "Except it didn't make much sense. It had something to do with frost, and how it was your enemy, only it was your ally, too."

My hand slipped inside my leather jerkin and felt the small, smooth circle of stone tucked within. When the Tarrasians came to Theysa, I thought it meant the witch was wrong, that she had no magic. I knew now that wasn't true. The witch had never said the empire would not come. Instead she had shown me Tarras in the fire, to let me judge for myself.

Yet if she truly had magic, why had she come to the garrison? Hadn't she seen her own death?

It is best not to look to the flames for one's own future....

Before I could wonder more, Virago was suddenly beside me on his black horse. He laughed, and his sword glinted crimson in the morning sun.

"Come on, Calavus! Glory awaits you!"

I hesitated, then reached out and gripped Virago's arm, halting him. "Wait ... I have an idea."

Virago frowned. "Yes?"

I licked my lips. The words hardly seemed my own. "Let us leave the Theysan companies in reserve. Let the Thanadain think we are weaker than we are. Then, as they rush to meet us, I will call my soldiers in and—"

"And we will crush them from both sides!" Virago's eyes shone. "By Vathris, I think you're a true Tarrasian after all, Calavaus."

I nodded and said nothing. Virago gave the orders. Moments later a horn shattered the air, and I spurred my horse after the high commander. The other mounted soldiers pounded to either side, while behind us, in three precisely ordered companies, the Tarrasian foot soldiers marched down the embankment. My men remained out of sight above. Ice crackled under hooves and boots as we moved onto the river, then Virago spread his arms, and all came to a halt, standing in formation.

The Thanadain huddled in an orderless mob thirty paces away. Now that I was close I could see how pitiful the barbarians were. While they were tall, bones protruded beneath their pale skin. They were half-dead already from hunger and cold. But the light of desperation shone in their strange, pale eyes.

Virago raised his hand above his head, ready to bring it down in a swift, chopping motion: Charge.

Before he could act, I reached inside my jerkin and drew out the pale disk of stone. *Hadeth.* Frost.

I pressed my eyes shut, and for a moment I saw Tarras: its gilded gates opening as I marched through in triumph. Soon all in the empire would know the name Calavus. That was what Virago had said. And so it would be—but not in the way

he had thought. The vision of Tarras faded in my mind, and I knew I would never see the golden domes again, neither in visions nor in life. I was no Tarrasian.

"By the Bloody Bull!" Virago snarled. "What are you doing, Calavus? Is that some sort of barbarian charm?"

I opened my eyes and met Virago's gaze. "You must fight frost with frost."

Before he could question me, I hurled the rune forward. With a sound like a chime it struck the ice halfway between the Tarrasians and the Thanadain. Virago opened his mouth, but whatever words he uttered were lost as a deep groan thrummed on the air. The horses pranced, and the barbarians scrambled back as the ice of the river trembled beneath our feet.

At first I thought the ice was breaking in the place where the rune had fallen. It seemed water bubbled up from a great crack, forming new, crystalline shapes as it met the frigid air. Then the shapes began to move.

One by one, with brittle steps, they walked from the gap in the ice: warriors as pale as frost bearing swords like icicles. Screams rose from the Thanadain and oaths from the Tarrasians. More cracks opened, and more warriors of frost poured forth, until there were hundreds of them. Armor like broken glass covered them, and their translucent bodies refracted the crimson winter sun, so that it seemed a heart beat within each icy warrior's breast.

Howls of terror came from the Thanadain now. They quailed, falling and retreating over the ice. Virago leaned in his saddle to grip my arm. His eyes blazed.

"Of course, Calavus—now I see. You fight them with their own foul magic. It's brilliant. Now call in your men, and we'll kill them all."

I swallowed hard. Did I truly mean to do this? However, even as I wondered, I spoke the words.

"You will never kill again, Dor Virago."

He frowned at me, and the light in his eyes wavered. Before he could speak, I lifted a hand and pointed to him and the other Tarrasians.

"*Hadeth!*" I called.

The frost warriors knew their equals and foes. Together they shambled across the frozen river.

By the time the soldiers of Tarras understood what was happening, it was far too late. With the sound of ice on steel the two forces met. At first it seemed no contest. The frost warriors shattered to splinters under the blows of Tarrasian swords. Then more of the icy figures came, and more. Steel was stronger, but ice was inexorable. You cannot defeat winter, Yarrow had said.

Cold ice pierced warm flesh. Screams soared on the air. Blood flowed briefly, then froze. As the Tarrasians died, pale hands reached from crevices in the river and pulled the still-thrashing bodies of the men beneath the ice.

Virago's eyes whirled. Spittle frothed and froze on his lips. "By Vathris—you've ruined us all, Calavus!"

He swung his sword at me.

The motions were so easy, as if I had been a great warrior all along. I deflected his blow, then brought my father's sword around in a glittering arc to lay open his throat.

"No, Virago," I murmured. "You ruined yourselves long ago."

His eyes fluttered shut, and he toppled from the back of his horse as the beast bolted. Even as Virago struck the ice a crack opened. White hands encircled his arms and his legs, then pulled him down into dark water. The crevice froze over again, and he was lost to sight.

I slipped from the back of my horse and looked up to see the last of the frost warriors fall and shatter, turning into so much snow. It was over. To a man the Tarrasians were gone. Atop the embankment my men watched, their eyes wide with wonder.

I looked down and saw that my sword and my hands were spattered with blood. Virago's blood. Was it right what I had done? I didn't know. But perhaps it was a good thing to doubt, to always question one's own actions, lest the coldness of pride turn one to ice.

"Great wizard ..." a deep voice spoke.

I turned and saw a huge barbarian man standing before me. The silver torc around his neck told me he was their king. Behind him were a dozen warriors. Had they come to slay me now that I was alone? I gazed into the king's eyes, the color of the winter sky. Then, to my astonishment, he knelt on the ice before me. His warriors did the same.

"We shall follow you, great wizard of winter," the barbarian king said in thickly accented Tarrasian.

In a crystalline moment I saw it. They were cold and wretched, yes, but still proud. I would march on Tarras with ten thousand Thanadain behind me. None would stand in our way. The witch was right, I would rule.

I shook my head, dispelling the image. Yes, I would rule—but as king, not as emperor. We had no need of Tarras and its golden spires here. Light sparked off ice, and in it I saw a new vision: a stone keep of many towers rising over the verdant plains along the river.

I gripped the barbarian king's thick wrists. "We will build a new kingdom here. Together."

He smiled in return, displaying big, white teeth. Then he turned, raised his arms, and shouted to his people in their own tongue, translating my words. Shouts of joy rose from the throng, echoed by my own men.

And there, in the midst of winter, it felt as warm as springtime.

Mark Anthony has written five novels set in some of TSR's most popular worlds. Now he's ventured into worlds of his own invention for his epic fantasy series, The Last Rune. The first two books of the series are Beyond the Pale *and* The Keep of Fire. *This story is set five hundred years before the events of The Last Rune. Mark lives in Colorado where he is presently at work on book three of the series. Visit* **www.thelastrune.com** *to learn more.*

Dragon® MAGAZINE Deluxe Dungeons contest

There are many ways to enhance the gaming experience. Some people use painted miniatures to add realism to their AD&D® game combats. Others play "mood music" to stay focused on the mission. What do you do to enhance your roleplaying experience?

We want to know your favorite trick or tip! Tell us one cool thing you do to add atmosphere to your fantasy or science-fiction campaigns, then write it on a postcard and send it in!

To Enter

Send us your postcard telling us your favorite trick or technique for adding atmosphere to your campaigns. On the postcard, be sure to include your name, address, phone number, and email address (optional). If you are under 18, you must have a parent or guardian sign the postcard.

We accept postcard submissions only! Winning entries will be selected based on novelty and originality. All entries must be received by **January 21, 2000.**

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One winning entry and one runner up will be selected.

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- The runner up will receive three TOXIC BAG Productions *GAME MASTERS COLLECTION* sound effects CDs.

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1. Entry: To enter, send a postcard including your name, address, phone number, and your idea ("Entry") to TSR, Inc. ("TSR") *DRAGON Magazine* "Deluxe Dungeons" Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many postcards as you wish, but only one Entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same entry more than once. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), January 21, 2000. Winners will be selected by a team of TSR judges based on the Entry's originality and appropriateness. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the Entries received.

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"Deluxe Dungeons" **Contest**

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WIZARDRY FROM THE WILDERNESS

Savage Spells

Recovered from the lost tribe of the Tava-besk, these "savage" spells can make excellent additions to your spellbook.

by
Jeffrey N. Mendoza

illustrated by
John Stanko

TERIL STOPPED. BEFORE HIM LAY THE REMAINS OF wooden cabins and huts. In the center of the debris, a firepit cradled a pile of charred skulls. Teril gently lifted one; its front tooth had a chip in the shape of a half moon. This had been Teril's brother, Hanth. Teril's companions gathered around him in silence.

Teril had been away for ten years. He seldom spoke of his home but was never without his necklace, strung with the teeth of his tribe's vanquished enemies.

When Teril and his companions heard that the Calorans had burned out Teril's people, the Tava-besk, they investigated. Teril's people rarely ambushed traveling merchants. For the local rulers, however, even two raids along the Northern Trade Route were too many. The lords of Calor sent a small army, and the results of their handiwork surrounded Teril's band.

The mage set his brother's skull back among the others and walked unsteadily toward the remains of the largest cabin. The soldiers of Calor had been thorough. All of the tribe's treasures were gone. A magical amulet, carved from the bones of beasts, lay broken on the ground. Its magic had been inadequate to protect the village.

Although the largest cabin was in ruin, it was possible that certain hidden treasures remained. Teril's friends watched as he cleared the rubble where the main cabin had stood. Teril peered at the ground and reached through the earth, which was but an illusion. When Teril stood, his companions saw that he reverently held a strange tome bound in pale leaves.

TANA RELATHA

Tana Relatha, or "white leaf" in the Common tongue, weighs about 4 pounds. The tome is 10 inches tall, 7 inches wide, and 3 inches thick. The covers and binding are composed of layered strips of woven reeds in a criss-cross fashion. The book can be opened only by one who wears the crossed-spears symbol of the Tava-besk tribe.

The pages are made of albino *rela* leaves, woven magically so that there are no seams or discernible leaf edges. The leaves are thin but surprisingly tough, more resilient than the finest paper. The ink is phosphorescent and can be read in the dark, but this does not make a viable source of light for other purposes. The contents are written not in Common but in the Tava-besk pictorial script

This book was made late in the tribe's history. One fifth of the book's pages are dedicated to the tale of the Tava-besk's conquest of their rivals, the Tava-skril. The rest contains the following spells: *light, metamorphose liquids*, mudpack**, sleep, transmute water to dust*, wall of fog, bind, camouflage voices**, flaming sphere, levitate, sap burst**, strength, web, burrow**, phantasmal mists**, spider cord***.

* Indicates a spell from the *Complete Wizards Handbook*.

** Indicates a new spell described below

New Wizard Spells

Mudpack

(Conjuration/Summoning)
Level: 1
Range: 30 yards
Components: S, M
Duration: 4 rounds maximum
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell causes a small mud ball to speed toward the target. If the target fails a saving throw vs. spell (modified for Dexterity), the target is instantly covered in a thick layer of mud. The mud covers all areas of the creature's body including eyes, ears, clothing, armor, and weapons. The mud makes maneuvering in combat difficult and renders weapons unwieldy. Until the mud is removed, the victim suffers a –2 penalty to attack rolls and a +2 penalty to Armor Class for 2 rounds, then a –1/+1 penalty to the same rolls for 2 more rounds. After spending 1 round clearing away the mud, the victim suffers no additional effects other than a filthy appearance. The mud remains until thoroughly cleaned off with a good bath. This spell affects only creatures of size Large or smaller.

The material component for the spell is a fist-sized ball of mud, which is consumed in the casting.

Camouflage Voices

(Alteration)
Level: 2
Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 creature + 1 creature/2 levels
Saving Throw: None

This spell grants the affected creatures the ability to cause any language they speak to sound like a natural animal language. Although the affected vocalizations might sound like bird, monkey, wolf, or other animal sounds, the other affected creatures hear the language actually spoken. The spell grants no ability to converse with real animals, nor does it aid creatures that do not speak a common language. Affected individuals can switch from using the alternate animal voice to their normal mode of speaking at will. The spell affects up to one creature plus one additional creature for every two levels the caster possesses.

A character who knows the language of the animal the spell mimics can tell immediately that it is gibberish but cannot discern the true nature of the conversation or even realize that a spell is at work. Characters who have the Spellcraft proficiency and have encountered the *camouflage voices* spell before can identify the effect by making a successful proficiency check. Spells like *comprehend languages* can penetrate the *camouflage voices* spell.

The material component for this spell is a bit of fur, feather, horn, or skin from an animal. The exact nature of the component determines the "language" the conversation sounds like to those not affected by the spell.

Sap Burst

(Evocation)
Level: 2
Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 10' radius sphere
Saving Throw: Neg.

Upon casting this spell, all surfaces in the area of effect become coated with a ¼-inch thick layer of sticky tree sap. Creatures in the area of effect must roll a saving throw vs. spell modified by their Armor Class adjustment or Dexterity. Success indicates the creatures have moved from the area of effect before the sap forms on them. Failure indicates that the victims' exposed surfaces (flesh, clothes, armor, weaponry, or other items) are layered with the sap. The sap is sticky and clings to the affected creatures until removed or washed off. Washing away the sap with water takes 1 full turn, while using alcohol or similar solvent takes only 1d4+1 rounds.

Any creature covered in the sap suffers a –2 penalty to attack rolls, a +2 penalty to Armor Class, and a –1 penalty to saving throws. At any time, the victim can spend 1 round clearing the sap from his or her eyes, ears, and weapons, after which the victim suffers only a –1 penalty to attack rolls. The penalty remains until the victim is thoroughly cleaned or the spell's duration elapses.

Thieves attempting to Move Silently through an area affected by this spell suffer a –40% penalty to their checks.

The material component for this spell is a piece of amber, which is consumed in the casting.

Burrow

(Alteration)
Level: 3
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 3 rounds/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

> Teril peered at the ground and reached through the earth, which was but an illusion

Upon a willing man-sized or smaller subject, this spell confers the ability to burrow through soft earth. The subject digs through the earth as a mole, creating a tunnel about 30 inches in diameter at a rate of 20 feet per round. Other creatures can follow through the tunnel, depending on the stability of the earth. The spell stabilizes a freshly dug section of the tunnel for a number of rounds depending on the ground composition: sand 2 rounds, mud 4 rounds, and soft dirt 6 rounds. Tunnels through hard or compact dirt might hold their shape for 10–15 rounds or longer, at the DM's discretion.

Upon expiration of the spell, all tunnels immediately collapse. A *dispel magic* spell cast on a section of the tunnel causes it to collapse. If cast directly on the affected creature, *dispel magic* ends all effects of the spell immediately.

The material component for this spell is a mole's paw, which is not consumed in the casting.

Phantasmal Mists

(Illusion/Phantasm)
Level: 3
Range: 5 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 20' radius sphere
Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell creates a thin, green mist that causes creatures in the area of effect to experience an audio, visual, and tactile hallucination unless they make successful saving throws vs. spell. The maximum number of Hit Dice of creatures affected cannot exceed 2 Hit Dice per level of the spellcaster. All creatures to be affected must be within a 20' radius sphere. The mists spiral out from the center of effect to surround the targets. A failed saving throw indicates the target suffers a hallucination as determined by rolling 1d20:

1d20	Hallucination
1–9	Tiny creatures (insects, spiders, centipedes, and so on)
10–16	Small creatures (snakes, lizards, dogs, wolves, and so forth)
17–19	Medium-sized animals (giant scorpions, huge spiders, demi-humans, and so forth)
20	Combination of above (roll twice, ignoring another roll of 20)

The affected creatures perceive the illusory creatures attacking them. (Arachnids and ants swarm the body, snakes wind around the extremities or bite, and larger creatures attack with bites and claws). Affected creatures defend themselves against the illusory assailants to the exclusion of all else. Regardless of the mode of attack, the victims suffer 1d4 points of illusory damage each round. Every round a victim is attacked by an opponent other than the hallucinations, the victim gains another saving throw. A successful saving throw at any time frees the victim from the spell. A creature rendered unconscious suffers no further damage from this spell.

Normally, the duration of the spell is 1 round per caster level. Prevailing wind conditions in the area affects the duration as shown in the table below:

Wind Level	Duration (Rounds)
Calm (>20 mph)	1/level
Moderate Breeze (20–45 mph)	1/2 levels
Strong Winds (46–55 mph)	1/4 levels

In all cases, round up when determining duration per level.

In winds stronger than 55 mph, the target creatures are plagued by the mists for only 1 round. If a successful *dispel magic* or a spell such as a *gust of wind* is cast directly on an affected creature, the spell terminates for that particular victim.

The material component for this spell is a mixture of seeds, pollens, or extracts from hallucinatory plants, all of which are consumed in the casting.

Spider Cord

(Conjuration)
Level: 3
Range: 5 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 3 turns/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell gives the caster the ability to project thin, sticky ropes of fiber reminiscent of a spider's thread. The cord must be conjured so as to bind two objects or surfaces together. The cord is 1 inch thick, semi-elastic, and can be up to 2 yards long per caster level. At the caster's option, the strand can be sticky or not. The caster can conjure one cord per two experience levels but can activate only one each round. Activating cords after initial casting requires concentration and has an initiative modifier of 3.

This spell can be used to bind a size Medium or Small creature to an object or surface in range. A target creature receives a saving throw vs. spell to avoid the effect. If the saving throw is successful, the cord fails to bind the target but remains attached to the object or surface. Such a cord can then be attached to another surface. (The adhesion at the end of the strand remains for the duration of the spell.) Note that the stickiness along the strand's length is not nearly as powerful as the adhesion at the ends and is nothing more than a minor nuisance to victims.

If the saving throw fails, the strand attaches onto the victim at a random location. For humanoid creatures roll percentile dice:

1d100	Affected Location
01–15	left leg
16–30	right leg
31–76	torso
77–87	left arm
88–98	right arm
99–00	head

The caster can attempt to bind a cord to a particular part of the body. This attempt grants a bonus to the victim's saving throw: torso +1, arm/leg +2, specific arm/leg +3, head +6. If the caster desires to bind two creatures together, each makes a saving throw. If one fails, but the other succeeds, one end of the cord is attached to the creature that fails its saving throw, but the other end appears near the second creature unattached and fails to adhere to it, leaving the second target free to move unhindered. If the caster wishes to bind a humanoid's arms together, for instance, the target creature is entitled to two saving throws, each with a +3 bonus.

If weapons are used in an attempt to free a victim, each cord is treated as AC 2 and breaks after sustaining 10 points of slashing damage. Snapping a strand or pulling it free of an attached object or surface requires a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll. If a cord is exposed to a fire source, it bursts into flames that spread to any surface the strand touches. Creatures attached to a flaming cord suffer 1d6 points of fire damage, and if the area of their body touching the strand is flammable (clothing, for example) it too ignites. A cord burns for 1 round, after which it crumbles into ashes.

The caster can end the spell prematurely with a snap of his or her fingers. When the spell elapses, all strands dissolve and disappear.

The material component of this spell is a strand from the web of a giant spider. The component vanishes upon casting.

TSANAK DORTH

In the capital city of Caloran, the Academy of Wizards researches and archives ancient magics. Upon his return from his ruined home, Teril recounted the chronicles of the Tava-besk and described the spells of Tana Relatha to the chancellor of the Caloran Academy to preserve the memory of his tribe and to improve the Academy's opinion of savage magics. Furthermore, he shared the details of the *camouflage voices* and *phantasmal mists* spells for posterity. Those fortunate enough to have access to the Academy's library might stumble upon these savage spells.

Teril also described a second tome that the tribal wizard who trained him used as his main spellbook. Teril is not sure what circumstances took place such that the wizard would remove the tome from its safe hiding place.

Tsanak Dorth, or "black rock" in the Common Tongue, is a heavy tome bound with molded oak roots. It measures 16 inches high, 11 inches wide, and 2 inches thick. The covers are magically strengthened sheets of thinly cut and polished obsidian.

Tsanak Dorth has no conventional lock, but it cannot be opened unless the possessor first utters the name of the tribe, Tava-besk. The pages are made of bark, which is flexible yet dry and tough as leather. The writing on the pages is in phosphorescent ink.

Fully one third of the book chronicles the tribe's early days. Like the Tana Relatha, the tale is written in Tava-besk pictorial script. It contains the following spells: *affect normal fires, detect magic, forest of eyes***, light, find familiar, protection from evil, read magic, wall of fog, wall of leaves***, *bone shards***, *continual light, flaming sphere, harsh step***, *natural cloak***, *splintering tree***, *treeswift***, *burrow, clairvoyance, hold person, phantasmal mists,* and *spider cord.*

** Indicates a new spell described below.

New Wizard Spells

Wall of Leaves
(Evocation)
Level: 1
Range: 5 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: One 10' × 10' square/level
Saving Throw: None

This spell is effective only in an area thick with foliage or brush. The spell brings into existence a thin wall of leaves that obstructs normal vision. The leaves are always of the most common type found in the general vicinity. The caster can slope or curve the wall or stretch it between adjacent bushes or trees so as to appear more inconspicuous. If cast in a particularly dense forest, observers might not notice the presence of the wall unless carefully inspecting the area or employing the Observation proficiency.

Passage through the leaves causes no harm; it serves only to confuse intruders, obscure trails, or prepare for an ambush.

The material component for this spell is a handful of leaves that vanish when the spell is cast.

Bone Shards
(Evocation)
Level: 2
Range: 5 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: ½

This spell must be cast while the caster holds the skull of a large lizard, crocodile, bear, tiger, or other carnivorous animal. Upon casting the spell, the skull shatters and the pieces vanish, whereupon the target creature is bombarded with shards of bone and teeth. The target must be within range; otherwise, the spell is wasted. The bone fragments cause 2d6 points of damage +1 point per caster level or half damage if a saving throw succeeds. A failed saving throw vs. spell also imposes a –1 penalty to the victim's attack and damage rolls until the embedded shards are removed. If the creature spends 4 rounds removing the shards, it suffers no further ill effects. This spell is not effective against undead creatures.

The material component is the large, undamaged skull that is destroyed in the casting.

Harsh Step
(Alteration)
Level: 2
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 5 hours + 1 hour/level
Casting Time: 5 rounds
Area of Effect: 10' radius/level
Saving Throw: None

This spell functions only in terrain thick with vegetation or ground cover. When a creature heavier than 20 pounds moves through the fixed area of effect, the creature's footfalls sound as though the individual were walking through crackling leaves, sloshing through thick mud or snow, or making a similarly noisy passage. The spell amplifies these natural sounds to the volume of a loud conversation. Successful Move Silently attempts reduce the spell's amplification, making the enhanced sounds only about as loud as a quiet conversation.

The material component for this spell is a pile of dead leaves, grass, or similar brush, which must be crushed and burned at the center of the area of effect.

Forest of Eyes
(Illusion/Phantasm)
Level: 1
Range: 10 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 5 rounds/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: 10' radius + 5' radius/level
Saving Throw: Special

Upon casting this spell, multiple audio and visual illusions spring into existence in an area of effect that can be centered on a stationary or mobile creature or object. The caster must have an unobstructed line of sight to the target when the spell is cast.

If the spell is cast upon a creature, the applicable magic resistance and saving throws must be made. A successful magic resistance roll or saving throw negates the spell. No saving throw is allowed if the spell is cast on an inanimate object, unless the object is worn or carried by a creature.

Any creature within the area of effect perceives subtle movement in the surrounding trees, brush, or other foliage. The sounds produced by the spell range from chirping, croaking, or buzzing to low, menacing growls. There is a 10% chance per round that a random creature in the area of effect sees a pair of glowing eyes in the shadows.

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The spellcaster can eliminate some or most of these sounds and images to localize the illusion and draw attention to that area or away from another. This function of the spell requires active concentration. When the caster ceases concentrating, the general effect resumes.

This spell is often used to disturb and dissuade trespassers or distract creatures in preparation for an ambush. Any creature affected by the illusion suffers +2 penalties to its surprise and initiative rolls for the first round of combat.

The material component is a pair of animal eyes. The eyes crumble to dust upon casting.

Treeswift

(Alteration)
Level: 2
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/levels
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: None

This spell enables unencumbered humanoids to move through trees via branches and vines at their normal movement rate by jumping and swinging. The affected creature can leap 8 feet vertically or 15 feet horizontally from tree to tree and normally has no chance of falling. If attacked while moving under the effects of a *treeswift* spell, the subject must make a successful Dexterity check or else fall to the ground, suffering damage as appropriate. Movement of this sort is viable only in areas where trees are plentiful, such as forests, tropical areas, and some swamps.

The material component for this spell is a bit of ape or monkey hair.

Natural Cloak

(Illusion/Phantasm)
Level: 2
Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn + 5 rounds/level
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 creature/levels
Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the caster to bestow an illusory plant disguise upon other creatures. Only size Medium or smaller creatures are affected by the spell. To casual observers, affected creatures appear as bushes, small trees, tall clumps of grass, or some other appropriately sized plant. When the affected creatures move slower than their full movement rate, the observers see the plantlike illusions scurry or move about as if they had uprooted themselves and gained the ability to walk. Any active attempt to disbelieve such an illusion has a +2 bonus. If an enspelled creature moves at full movement rate or attacks, the disguise fades, but it returns if the creature spends 1 full round standing still. The caster can end the spell with a single word. The spell is useful mainly in areas thick with vegetation.

The spell requires a part of a plant (one for each recipient). The patches of grass, tree roots, or small branches must be carried on the recipients' persons for the duration of the spell. If the material is dropped prematurely, the effect ends for that particular recipient.

Splintering Trees

(Evocation)
Level: 2
Range: 20 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 10' radius circle
Saving Throw: 1/2

This spell can be cast only if five or more living or felled trees (not saplings) are within 100 feet of the target area. All those within the area of effect are bombarded with splints of bark and wood that cause 3d4 points of damage. This spell does not harm other trees or vegetation except for the trees detonated in the casting of the spell, including plant creatures like treants or shambling mounds. Such creatures might well be irritated when targeted by the spell, but they suffer no damage from it.

The material component for this spell is a handful of wood chips, which crumble to dust upon casting.

"I'm sorry, but Madam Zazooza isn't telling fortunes due to a system crash."

In 1997, Jeff Mendoza was lost in the Amedio Jungle. One year later, these articles were found.

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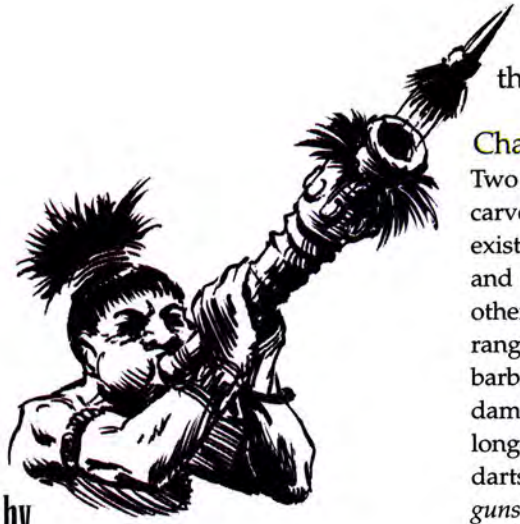
PRIMITIVE BUT POWERFUL

Jungle Magic

More than a dozen enchanted objects from beyond the bounds of civilization.



by
Jeffrey N. Mendoza

illustrated by
Jim Crabtree

WHAT MAGIC DOES A SAVAGE WIZARD WIELD? WOULD one bear an ordinary *sword +1*? A routine *ring of invisibility*? Each savage wizard is likely to have a unique concept of what magical items should be, and the jungle wilds provide endless possibilities for their use. Shamans and witch doctors draw upon hundreds of years of knowledge and magical items passed from generation to generation, for the survival of the tribe depends on sharing information rather than hoarding it. If the tribe is on good terms with other local tribes, there might even be a steady trade of minor magical items, creating a surprisingly broad range of enchanted items in the hands of these so-called barbarians.

Cha'chal Blowgun

Two different types of these ornately carved wooden or bamboo blowguns exist. The first is about 14 inches long and is favored by small creatures. The other is 4–5 feet long and has a longer range. The 14" *blowgun* shoots small barbs or large thorns that cause 1 point of damage to a range of 10/20/30. The longer version can fire normal blowgun darts to a range of 20/40/60. Both *blowguns* give a +1 bonus to hit targets.

The *blowguns* magically coat the barb or dart with a powerful paralytic poison. Any creature hit with a dart must make a successful saving throw vs. paralysis or be paralyzed in 1d6 rounds; the effects last 2d4 hours. The *blowgun* can enchant up to eight darts in this manner in a single day. After eight shots have been fired (whether or not they hit their target), the magic of the *blowgun* becomes dormant for 24 hours. Any barb or dart that misses its target retains no magical properties, and the poison covering the dart dissolves immediately.

XP Value: 300 **GP Value:** 1,800 (small)
XP Value: 500 **GP Value:** 3,000 (large)

Bones of Foretelling

This set of nine small, rune-carved bones and their wooden bowl can aid a tribal shaman in foretelling an event important to the tribe. A mixture of powdered bark, plant juices, mushrooms, and three drops of the shaman's blood must be mixed before the shaman can make the augury.

When the *bones* are cast into the bowl with the mixture inside, the magic of the *bones* places the shaman in a trance for 5

rounds, during which time the shaman experiences divinatory mental images. These images relate to a probable event occurring within 2 weeks' time that involves one or more of the tribesmen or the tribal grounds. The vision is vague or even confusing, and the images are open to interpretation. Upon awakening, the shaman must make an Intelligence check to interpret the images correctly. Typical visions warn of upcoming battles, trespassers, a betrayal, or a death in the tribe.

The *bones of foretelling* can inspire only one vision each week.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 4,000

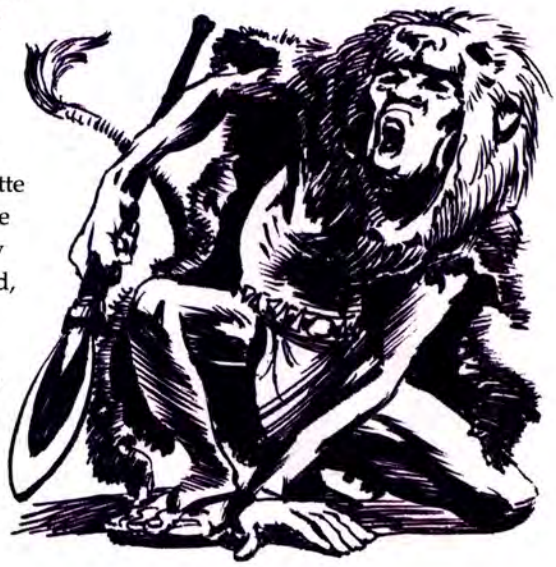
Censer of Guardians

This *censer* is a painted, hooded ceramic or bone pot for burning incense. Each censer is ornately carved or painted with pictures of wild animals. It requires one person an entire day to collect the necessary herbs, blossoms, powders, and plant extracts to form one briquette of incense for the *censer*.

Censers can be lit only by a shaman, witch doctor, or savage wizard. Once the incense is lit, the wisps of smoke form the hazy shape of an animal chosen by the witch doctor. The guardian can be commanded to guard an area or object, prevent designated creatures from leaving an area, or attack enemies of the *censer* user. Regardless of its appearance, the *censer* guardian has two attacks each round that cause 1d6 points of damage each. The guardian attacks and makes saving throws as a 4-HD monster, has 30 hp, and suffers only half damage from nonmagical weapons. The guardian cannot move more than 200 feet from the *censer*. When a guardian is defeated, the incense from which it was spawned crumbles to dust.

One guardian is summoned for each briquette lighted, and each briquette burns for 2 hours. A briquette cannot be extinguished and saved once ignited. If the incense is prematurely extinguished or the *censer* is destroyed, the guardians vanish immediately. After each use, the *censer* must be cleaned thoroughly (usually taking a full hour) before it can be used again. The censer cannot burn more than two briquettes of incense at a time.

XP Value: 1,600 **GP Value:** 8,500

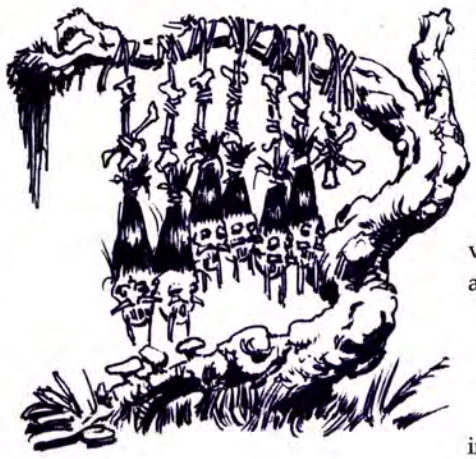


Wailing Chimes

These *chimes* are made of the decorated bones of animals and humanoids. They are usually placed in a sacred area such as the tribe's place of worship, burial grounds, or treasure trove.

Tribesmen who pass through or work in the protected area must wear the tribe's symbol. If a creature approaches within 100 feet of the *chimes* without such a symbol, the *chimes* ring. The ringing simulates the sounds of alarmed or pained animals associated with the tribe. For example, *chimes* crafted by a clan that reveres wolves sound like howling and barking lupines. The sounds can be heard a half mile away and persist until the *chimes* are destroyed or the intruders leave the area.

XP Value: 1,250 **GP Value:** 6,000



Spirit Cloak

This *cloak* is made from the head and hide of an animal, with most of the hide making the cape and the head functioning as the hood. It is durable, always in excellent condition, and decorated with beads and feathers. The *cloak* infuses the wearer with the spirit of a powerful animal and can be used only by warriors.

When the *cloak's* magic is in effect, a shimmering, translucent image of the great animal outlines the warrior's frame. The wearer adopts the animal's mode of movement, mannerisms, and vocal patterns for as long as the *cloak* is in use. Wearers retain complete use of their mental faculties, but they might not be able to express themselves adequately, depending on which animal the *cloak's* power mimics. In combat, the wearer gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls.

The magic of the *cloak* can be called upon once per day and lasts up to 2 turns, after which the wearer must rest for 1 hour. The wearer can end the enchantment at any time before the 2 turns elapse by silently willing the spirit dormant. Below are four possible variations of the *cloak* and the special abilities they bestow.

Wolf: The wearer gains a bite attack that inflicts 2d4+2 points of damage, and the wearer's movement rate is increased by 75%. The presence of the

spirit has a 75% chance to frighten any herbivores within 40 feet. The wolf warrior can also emit a ghastly howl every 5 rounds for 1 round. Any herbivore within 1 mile has a 90% chance of being frightened and bolting.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 5,000

Bear: The wearer has three attacks: two paws and one bite (1d3/1d3/1d4 for Small creatures wearing the cloak; 1d4/1d4/1d6 for Medium or Large creatures). If a strike with a paw is successful with a natural die roll of 18 or higher, the wearer can hug, causing additional damage (1d4+1 for Small creatures; 2d4 for Medium or Large creatures). While standing upright, small wearers can *levitate* 2 feet above solid ground, and Medium or Large wearers can *levitate* 1 foot above the ground as long as the *cloak* is active.

XP Value: 1,250 **GP Value:** 6,000

Ape: The wearer can swing through trees at his or her normal movement rate and has three attacks each round: two fists and one fierce bite (1d3/1d3/1d6 for Small creatures; 1d4/1d4/1d8 for Medium or Large). If the wearer strikes an opponent with both fists on the same round, he or she inflicts an additional 1d6 points of rending damage, much like the carnivorous ape.

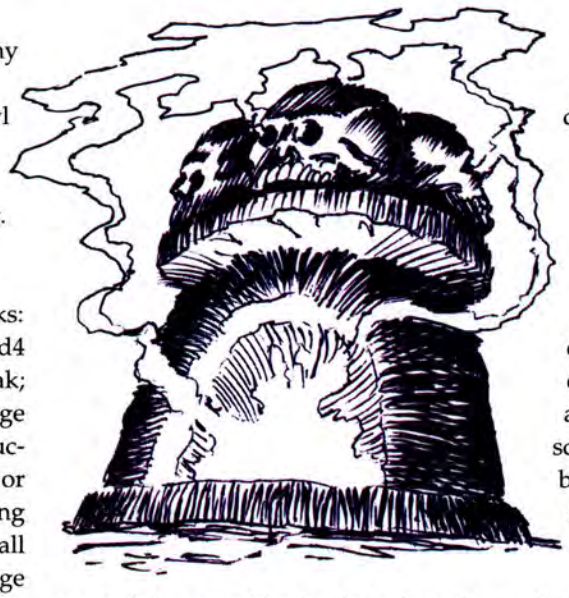
XP Value: 1,300 **GP Value:** 6,500

Lion: The *cloak* wearer is surprised only on a result of "1" and can leap up to 20 feet horizontally or 10 feet vertically. The wearer has three normal attacks: two claws and one bite (1d3/1d3/1d6 for Small creatures; 1d4/1d4/1d8 for Medium or Large). If both claw attacks hit, the wearer may make two additional raking attacks for 1d3 points of damage (for Small creatures) or 1d4 points of damage (for Medium or Large creatures).

XP Value: 1,500 **GP Value:** 8,000

Council of Skulls

Two sets of skulls are needed to make this magical scrying device. The skulls can be taken from any Medium-size or larger creatures, but they must be whole and completely undamaged. One set is buried on the boundaries of the tribal



grounds in a roughly circular orientation no less than 4 feet under the surface. The second set is used to form a small, permanent altar and firepit at the center of the circle. A savage mage needs three skulls for every ⅛-mile radius to be affected: two for the circle and one for the firepit. Affected areas can be created only in ⅛-mile increments. The smallest area that can be affected is a ½-mile radius, which requires twelve skulls.

When a savage mage leads at least six members of the tribe in a chant around the *skulls* and a large fire, the *skulls* act as a powerful scrying device. While the *skulls*' knowledge is limited to objects and creatures within their border, the relative familiarity of the user to the target is not important as it is with the function of a *crystal ball*. The *skulls* can show the whereabouts of trespassers, rare medicinal plants, food, animals, or the location of any particular animal or person within the *skulls*' area of effect.

After 5 rounds of chanting, the savage mage asks a question. If the answer is negative—for example, if the leader asks whether there are trespassers on the grounds, and there are none—the *skulls* remain inert and the fire stays unchanged. But if the desired object or creature exists within the area of effect, the smoke, flames, and ashes mix with the magic of the *skulls* to form a slightly blurred three-dimensional image of the object or creature and its immediate surroundings above the fire. The target's position relative to the *skulls* is revealed to the savage mage.

Each image relayed lasts for a maximum of 5 rounds. The leader can ask questions as long as the other six tribal folk remain chanting. The fire burns wood at twice the normal rate during the chant.

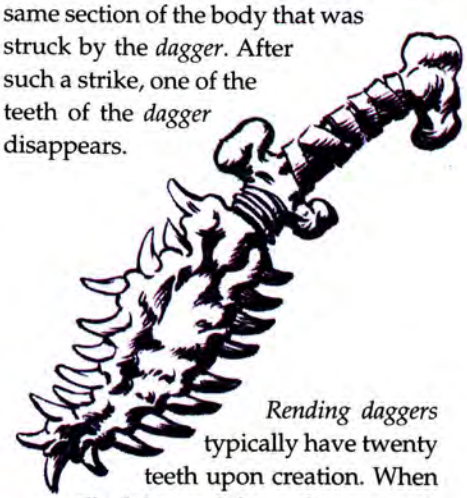
If one of the *skulls* is disinterred or if a *dispel magic* is cast directly on a *skull*, that part of the circle is hidden from the *skulls*. If more than 20% of the *skulls* are dug up or destroyed, all of the *skulls* lose their ability to scry. A destroyed *skull* can be replaced by enchanting a new *skull* with the same process used on its predecessor and burying it in the same place. The restoration of the *skull* allows the full circle to scry again.

XP Value: 30 per *skull*

GP Value: Nil

Rending Dagger

Animal teeth have been magically attached along the sharp, bladed edges of this bone *dagger +1*. When the wielder strikes an opponent with an unmodified attack roll of 19 or 20, the opponent suffers an additional wound (an additional 2d4+1 points of damage) as if bitten by a fierce animal. The bite appears on the same section of the body that was struck by the *dagger*. After such a strike, one of the teeth of the *dagger* disappears.



Rending daggers typically have twenty teeth upon creation. When all of the teeth have disappeared, the magic of the *dagger* is gone forever. Short sword variations of this magical weapon have thirty teeth initially; all other characteristics are the same. Both the *dagger* and *short sword* make item saving throws as hard metal.

XP Value: 200 **GP Value:** 1,100 (dagger)

XP Value: 350 **GP Value:** 1,700 (short sword)

Tribal Drum

When this small, wooden drum is beaten by a shaman during a battle, all tribal warriors within 100 feet are granted a +1 bonus to attack, damage, and saving throw rolls, while enemies suffer a –1 penalty to the same rolls. All benefits cease immediately once the drum beating ceases. The beating is always a rhythm special to the tribe, so only members of the tribe receive the bonuses.

XP Value: 750 **GP Value:** 2,500

Gourd of Concealment

This appears to be a normal gourd. When thrown against a hard surface, however, the *gourd* breaks and spews forth thick, green clouds of swamp gas that obstruct normal vision and infravision in a 60' radius. The gas clears in 4 rounds on a calm day, 3 rounds if a strong breeze is present, or 1 round if a stronger wind is present.

XP Value: 150 **GP Value:** 600

Bear Gauntlets

These brown furry mittens have sharp, clawlike protrusions on the end of each glove. A warrior who uses these in melee combat has two attacks per round, gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls, and causes 1d6 points of damage with each strike. No penalties are assigned for the multiple attacks per round. These can be used only by warriors or shamans of tribes that revere bears.

XP Value: 600 **GP Value:** 3,000

Headdress of Sight

This barbarian *headdress* is fashioned from the head of a beast renowned for its sight and perception, perhaps a lion, tiger, or large eagle. The headdress grants the wearer sight through any plant-life obstruction to a distance of 300 feet. The wearer can see through bushes, trees, tall grasses, and undergrowth to spot potential prey or enemies. The wearer can also spot hidden

and camouflaged creatures but cannot detect invisible, ethereal, or out–of –phase creatures. The wearer cannot see through any sort of rock but can see through dead plant material, even those that have been used to fashion dwellings such as log cabins and bamboo huts.

If the *headdress* is worn for more than 1 hour at a time, the wearer experiences vertigo and painful headaches until it is taken off (–2 to attack and saving throws cumulative for every extra hour worn). It cannot be used again until 24 hours have passed. The *headdress* only functions in areas thick with undergrowth. Only tribal shamans, witch doctors, or savage mages gain the benefits of the *headdress*.

XP Value: 1,000**GP Value:** 5,000

Horn of Wolf Summoning

This item is sometimes fashioned from the hollowed horn of some great beast or from a conch shell. When blown, the *horn* produces a wolf's howl. Within 1d6 rounds of sounding the *horn*, 2d4 wolves come to the location the *horn* was blown and defend the *horn*-blower to the death. The *horn*-blower cannot communicate with the wolves in any meaningful way. The wolves depart if the *horn*-blower dies, the *horn* changes possession, or the enemies are slain. If the wearer manages to communicate with the summoned wolves through a *speak with animals* spell or a *necklace of animal communication*, the animals might stay longer to converse or leave at their discretion.

The *horn's* magic can be called upon once per day. If blown more than once in a single day, the *horn* produces no sound.

XP Value: 700 **GP Value:** 3,500

Mask of Fear

This carved and painted wooden *mask* always depicts some hideous beast or monster. The magic of the *mask* can be activated only by a tribal witch doctor or shaman. When the wearer chants the command phrase and expends a charge from the mask, all opposing creatures within a 20' radius are affected and must make a saving throw vs. spell. If the saving throw is successful, nothing happens. A creature that fails and engages

the wearer in combat within 2 turns suffers a –2 penalty to attack and damage rolls (minimum of 1 point of damage per die) against the wearer. If the die roll of the saving throw is a natural 1 or 2, the creature flees in terror at its full movement rate for 1 turn. Creatures affected by the mask who return after 1 turn to attack the mask-wearer must make another saving throw.

All effects disappear 2 turns after the expenditure of the charge. When created, *masks of fear* are usually imbued with enough magic for twenty-five uses. The *mask* can be recharged.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 5,000

Necklace of Animal Communication

Necklaces of this type are made with the body parts (for example, teeth or feathers) of a specific type of animal. The *necklace* allows the wearer to understand and speak with any animal of that type but gives the wearer no influence over it. The animal might be wary of speaking with the wearer, or it might answer any questions it can. No animal languages are as extensive as humanoid languages, so the DM must use his or her best judgment to determine the vocabulary and concepts familiar to the animal.

If the wearer's tribe has domesticated some of the specified animal, the wearer might be able to command the animal to perform simple tasks.

XP Value: 400 **GP Value:** 3,000

Powder of Eternal Slumber

When blown directly into the face of a creature, this powerful magic forces the target creature to make a saving throw vs. poison. If the saving throw is successful, the creature sneezes a few times but otherwise is fine. Failure forces it into a deep coma. The creature falls unconscious 2d10 rounds after exposure and appears to be dead, with no observable breathing, heartbeat, or pulse. A *detect magic* spell indicates the creature is enchanted, and a *detect life* spell reveals it is alive.

Every day after being affected, the creature can make another saving throw. Each day that the creature fails the saving throw, it loses 20% of its full hit point total. Success indicates that the victim has awakened. Upon waking, victims do not feel unusually hungry or thirsty, but they are weak and suffer a –2 penalty to attack rolls and saving throws for 1 day. Victims die after being comatose for 5 days. *Slow poison* and *dispel magic* spells are ineffective. A *neutralize poison* spell is effective only if cast immediately after a *remove curse* spell.

Typically, five pinches of this powder are made at one time. If more than one pinch is used at once, the victim suffers a –1 penalty to saving throws per additional pinch, to a maximum of five pinches and a –4 penalty.

XP Value: 100 **GP Value:** 500 (pinch)

Oil of Marking

When smeared on a tree, rock, or other hard surface, this *oil* radiates a faint, iridescent light. After application, the *oil* cannot be rubbed or washed off by conventional means, and only destroying the surface upon which the *oil* was applied destroys the mark. Though it fades naturally after 1 year, the *oil* is usually used to mark the boundaries of a tribe's territory, to warn off rival tribes, and to dissuade trespassers. If used on a creature, the creature receives one saving throw vs. spell. If it succeeds, the mark fades immediately, but if it fails the mark remains on the creature's body for 1 year. A *dispel magic* spell cast at any level destroys marks made with the *oil*.

XP Value: 250 **GP Value:** 1,300

Curse Rattle

This *rattle* is a hardened gourd filled with sacred bones, beads, pebbles, and other exotic components, then tied to the end of a short bone. When the *rattle* is shaken for 1 round by a chanting shaman or witch doctor, it bestows a curse upon a single opponent. The exact curse can be chosen by the DM or from the effects suggested below. A successful saving throw vs. spell made at a –1 penalty indicates that the target avoids the effect. A *remove curse* spell eliminates the curse.

- The opponent is affected by the tiny creatures version of the *phantasmal mists* spell for a duration of 2d6 rounds. (The *phantasmal mists* spell is detailed in this issue's "Arcane Lore.")
- One of the opponent's limbs (determined randomly) is wracked with pain

causing 1d6 points of damage. The limb is rendered useless for 1 turn.

• Small lesions appear on the victim's skin and burst within 24 hours. The victim has a –3 Charisma reaction adjustment until a *remove curse* is used, at which time all scars and scabs disappear.

• The opponent is seized by vertigo. All attack rolls are made with a –2 penalty, and proficiencies, skill checks, and saving throws involving Dexterity suffer a –4 penalty. The effect lasts 3 turns.

Rattles are usually made with thirty charges, and they can be recharged.

XP Value: 40 **GP Value:** 200/charge

Warding Skulls

By preparing a number of skulls and using the appropriate enchantments, a savage mage can cause intelligent creatures to veer away from an area without their knowledge. For every yard in diameter to be warded, a savage mage needs one skull, but the diameter cannot be smaller than 5 yards. For example, to ward the tribe's treasure huts in an area with a diameter of 15 yards, the savage mage must find, prepare, and enchant fifteen size Medium or Large, undamaged animal or humanoid skulls. Making a set of *skulls* is difficult, and areas larger than 100 yards in diameter are extremely rare.

Any creature with an Intelligence higher than 3 approaching the warded area must make a saving throw vs. spell adjusted for Wisdom. (A character with the Direction Sense nonweapon proficiency gains a +2 bonus to his or her saving throw.) Any who fail this saving throw unknowingly turn away from or move around the protected area. This change of direction is entirely unnoticeable until after the warded area is passed. Structures or other visible distracting objects inside the protected area are ignored by those who fail their saving throw.

Groups containing some members who make successful saving throws and some who do not will undoubtedly have a conflict. Those who failed believe that the path around the enchanted area is their original course. Any suggestion that they use another course is met with objections that the alternative course is much too difficult to pass through and will slow them down; the path that avoids the warded area is much easier and quicker. If physically forced into the area, the affected creature may immediately make another saving throw with a +1 bonus; success indicates that the individual is no longer subject to the effects of the *skulls* as long as he or she remains inside the warded area. Any creatures who successfully enter but then leave the area must make another saving throw to reenter the area. A *dispel magic* cast on one of the *skulls* leaves a hole in the perimeter, through which creatures can pass freely for 1 round.

If more than 10% of the *skulls* (round up) are removed or destroyed, all the *skulls* lose their repelling ability. The *skulls* can be replaced, but the original area cannot be moved or expanded.

XP Value: 125 **GP Value:** Nil (per yard)

Jeff's currently an English teacher and traveler in Japan. Hack as he might through the urban jungles of Japan, he just can't find any savages out there who will share more of their magical secrets.

PC Portraits

SAVAGE HEROES

by David Day

"When I am hired for an assignment, I always work in the medium the art director calls for," mentions David Day. "Even though the PC Portraits are always in black and white, I could very easily visualize the savage heroes in full color. I hope the readers have a great time personalizing these characters."

SHOP-
Keep
by
JOHN
KOVALIC
LOSER
DORK!
FREAK!
:SIGH: MORE ROLEPLAYERS AND CARD GAMERS BICKERING?
I'M SICK OF DIVISIVENESS IN GAMING! I'M GOING TO UNITE THESE FACTIONS IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO!
ROLEPLAYERS! BACK OFF THE CARD GAMERS! BOARD-GAMERS! STOP MOCKING THE ROLEPLAYERS! HISTORICAL BUFFS! FANTASY GAMING ISN'T THE END OF THE WORLD!
SQUID LEADER
WE'RE ALL ONE HOBBY HERE, PEOPLE! CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG? ROLEPLAYERS, CARDGAMERS, BOARD GAMERS, MINIATURE ENTHUSIASTS UNITE!
LOOK AT ME!
I'M A ROLEPLAYER AND A HISTORICAL WARGAMER AND A CARD FANATIC AND A BOARD GAMER!
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:OH:
AND ROLEPLAYING...
AND BOARD GAMES...
AND MINIS...
SQUID LEADER
GET HIM!
LOSER!
DORK!
FREAK!
BY GOLLY, IT WORKED...

Role Models

Pop-Up Terrain

By J.D. Wiker and Jim Bishop

Photos by Craig Cudnohufsky

One drawback that some people see with using miniatures in the AD&D® game is that, for the most part, all the players can see all the miniatures all the time. There's no hiding when the players can simply move around the table for a better view.

The solution is to make use of "pop-up" terrain. This kind of terrain isn't fixed: It opens, it turns, it moves up and down. The simplest form is an inverted cup, painted to look like a bush. Underneath is a monster, waiting to spring out when an unsuspecting hero draws too close.

Building Pop-Up Terrain

Doors and windows also make good pop-up terrain. Villains inside can fire out and still have pretty good cover. This sort of terrain requires cardboard buildings, rather than just blocks of Styrofoam, but simple buildings can be made out of milk cartons (the top half makes a good house with a nice, peaked roof), cereal boxes (cut the bottom off and turn it upside down), and so on. The same process works for furniture. Imagine a chest that actually opens—and imagine what could be inside.

Pop-up walls can be simulated with moveable sections: Just cut some of those oh-so-versatile cereal boxes lengthwise, and line up the sections to make a longer wall. Then, when the heroes approach the appropriate section, simply slide it to one side to reveal the monster hiding inside.

The mechanism for using pop-up terrain is simple: Decide on a trigger and a result. The trigger is usually obvious—something like, "When a character pulls the lever" or "When a character steps on the section of floor closest to the chest." But triggers can certainly be more complex: "When 500 pounds of weight is placed on the floor here" or "If anyone casts a spell within 20 feet ."

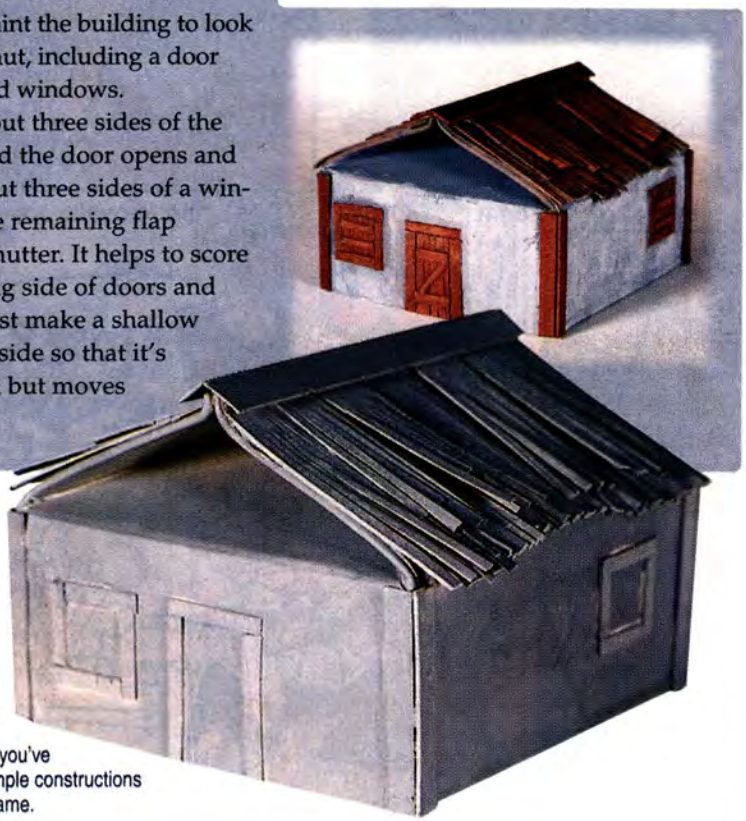
The result is what happens once the pop-up has triggered: "The first five feet of the wall moves to the left," "the floor gives way beneath them," or "the *fire trap* spell goes off."

Situations like these can make miniatures an exciting addition to the game: Everyone knows where the heroes are standing at the crucial moment.

Houses, Doors, and Windows

Making a house from a milk carton is simple. Begin by cutting the top 2 inches off a clean milk carton and trimming the binding off. Cut some thin strips off what's left, and glue them onto the "roof" to act as thatching. Paint the building to look like a small hut, including a door and shuttered windows.

Now cut out three sides of the doorway, and the door opens and shuts. Cut out three sides of a window, and the remaining flap becomes a shutter. It helps to score the remaining side of doors and windows. Just make a shallow cut on the inside so that it's still attached but moves more easily.



Creating miniatures-scale houses is easy if you've got milk. Even simple constructions add a lot to the game.

Jim Bishop's idea of pop-up terrain is playing AD&D on a Hungry Hungry Hippos *game. JD Wiker dreamed up the idea of pop-up terrain while playing with Legos.*

Shell Game Variations Keep your eye on the ball—er, the miniature. Remember not to use transparent cups when trying this trick at home.

DMs can number the cups to keep track of the figures while the players must guess where their heroes stand..

They're All Over the Place!

This scenario uses two different types of pop-up terrain: walls and fog. The heroes have entered a ruined fortress to seek out the wizard leader of a group of marauding orcs and gnolls. As the heroes reach the wizard's throne room, the wizard casts a *wall of fog* spell to give his servants cover from which to attack the heroes.

Begin by placing the walls. The room is fairly large—about 80' × 80'—with a main entrance and a couple of side exits. Unfortunately, with the fog, the heroes don't know exactly where the exits are, so set up the walls of the room as solid, with no openings. The heroes are just inside the main entrance, which for now they can still see.

Now place the orcs and gnolls in front of the wizard. Once all of the miniatures are placed—along with any additional terrain, like chests, chairs, and so forth—place plastic cups over everything except the walls, while the players look away or leave the room. Add a few extra cups concealing nothing but dice for a little added confusion.

When all is ready, the players can begin moving the plastic cups, though they can look under the cup before they move only if they spend a round getting their bearings first. In other words, they don't get to know which figure they are moving; they might be moving another hero—or even a monster!

If a PC wants to attack, the player simply nominates the cup toward which the hero is heading and can look at the figure under the cup after the attack roll. If a player maneuvers a cup to attack only to learn that it's not the figure he or she thought, then the PC has gotten turned around—and the one the player actually moved has wandered off in the wrong direction!

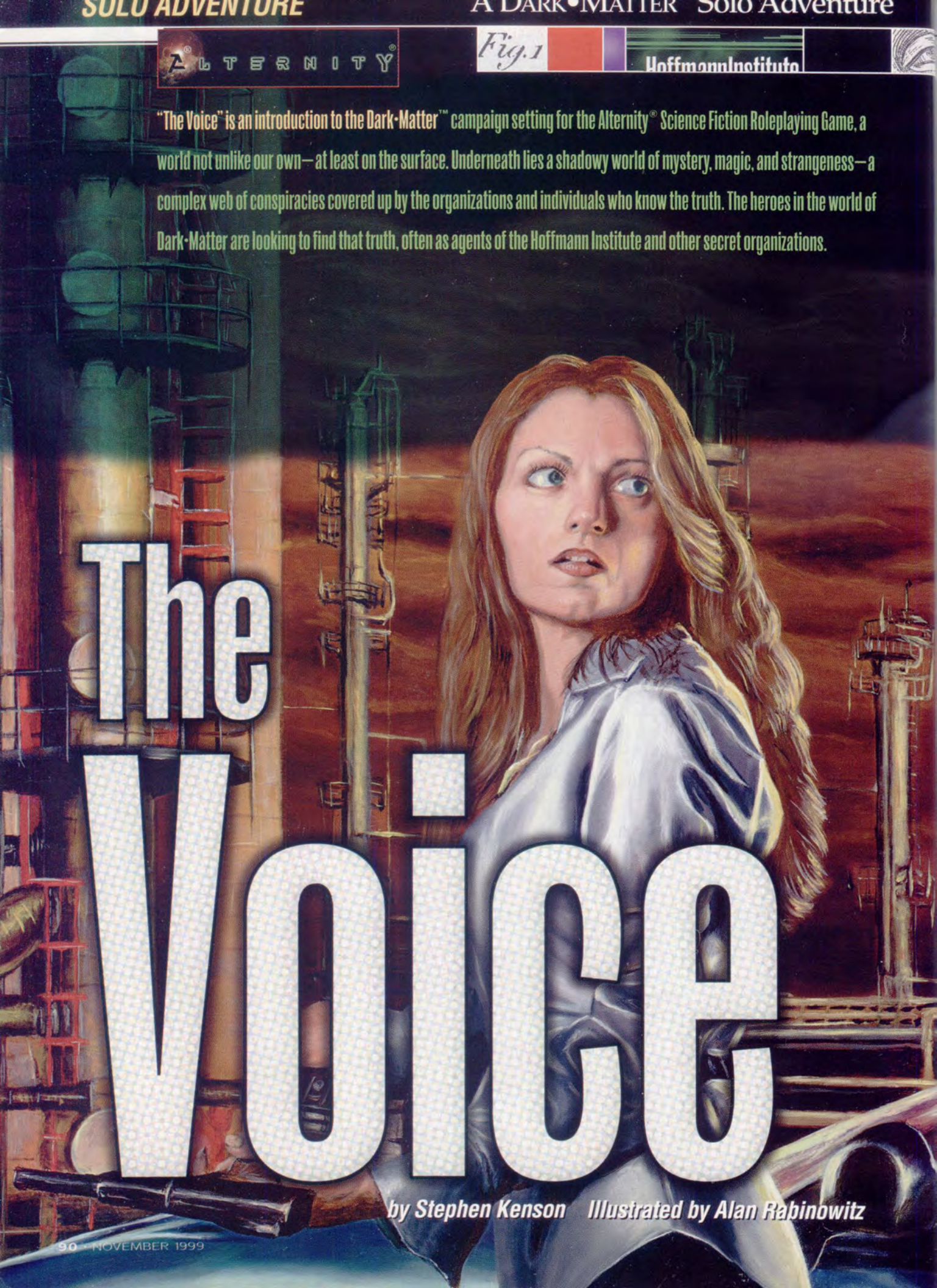
Similarly, a character trying to find the door must nominate a wall section and move to it to determine whether it's an exit. Characters who move to a wall can determine whether an exit is really there. If a hero remains in the doorway, he or she can help keep the wizard from escaping—which is the wizard's main goal once the heroes start winning.

The players are likely to work out a clever system of keeping in contact, such as calling to one another, issuing battle cries before they attack, and so forth. Doing so lets a character look under a given cup before he or she moves toward it or attacks—but only one cup each round. Furthermore, the wizard has told the orcs and gnolls what to expect, so they tend to "zero in" on any character making a lot of noise and they gain a –2 AC bonus while defending against yelling characters. They prefer to move toward loud characters rather than those who keep quiet.

ALTERNITY®

Fig. 1 Hoffmann Institute

"The Voice" is an introduction to the Dark•Matter™ campaign setting for the Alternity® Science Fiction Roleplaying Game, a world not unlike our own—at least on the surface. Underneath lies a shadowy world of mystery, magic, and strangeness—a complex web of conspiracies covered up by the organizations and individuals who know the truth. The heroes in the world of Dark•Matter are looking to find that truth, often as agents of the Hoffmann Institute and other secret organizations.



The Voice

by Stephen Kenson Illustrated by Alan Rabinowitz

What Do You Need?

To play this solo adventure, all you need is a pencil and some dice. Keep the hero sheet for Diana Hunter, agent of the Hoffmann Institute, handy as you play; you'll need to refer to it often in the adventure. Just start at "The Call," below, and read through it as the text directs; you'll learn the game mechanics as they're needed. Important game information is set apart from the main adventure text in sidebars.

The Alternity game uses the following dice: d20, d12, d8, d6, and d4. The d20 is the "control die." You always roll the control die when you need to make a roll. The other dice are "situation dice," which are added to or subtracted from the control die depending on the situation's difficulty. First read "The Game Mechanics" in the sidebar; other game mechanics are explained as the adventure unfolds, starting with "The Call."

The Game Mechanics

Using the dice described above, the basic Alternity game rule is fairly simple. Roll a number equal to or less than your target score to succeed at an action. Target scores include your ability scores, skill scores, and action check scores. If you roll higher than the target score, your hero fails. You always want to roll as low as possible—the lower the roll, the more likely the hero succeeds.

The scores on the hero sheet are divided into three categories by slash marks. These represent the target scores for three possible results, respectively: **Ordinary**, **Good**, and **Amazing**. Rolling the appropriate score or lower is an Ordinary success, one-half the score or lower is a Good success, and one-quarter of the score or lower is an Amazing success. Any roll greater than the target score is a Failure (or, in the case of an action check, a Marginal success).

Example: Diana Hunter has an action check score of 13. A 14 or greater is a Marginal success. A roll of 13–7 is an Ordinary success, 6–4 is a Good success, and 3 or less is an Amazing success.

The Call

You're beginning to think your contact won't call, that you've wasted over an hour sitting in your car in one of the most run-down sections of town in the dead of night. It wouldn't be the first lead that turned out to be a dead end—and probably not the last, either. Then your cellphone rings, breaking the silence.

"Hunter," you answer.

"Hello, Diana," comes the quiet voice from the other end of the phone. It's your informant. You call him the Voice. You don't know his real name or anything else about him, except that his information has been accurate so far. He knows things about secret U.S. government projects, things nobody should know, but which match information in the Institute's most secret files. All efforts to track him down have failed, but that's not surprising. If anyone knew the things that the Voice was telling the Institute, the Voice would have been killed by now.

"All right," you tell the Voice. "I'm here. Now what?"

"I'm glad you came, Diana," the Voice says, his calm tone reflecting some genuine appreciation. "I'm glad you decided to trust me."

"Don't push it," you reply. "Get to the point."

"Of course," the Voice says. "I want to show you something important."

"What's that?" you ask.

"I can't tell you over an open line," Voice says. "You have to trust me."

Easier said than done... Still, the Voice has been right so far, and the knowledge he has is tantalizing. "All right," you say.

"Good. Just follow my directions. Did you receive the package I sent you?"

Your hand drops down to rest on the small cardboard box on the passenger seat. It arrived this morning from a post-office box registered under a false name.

"Yes."

"Good. Put on the headset from the box, then hang up your phone."

The box contains a small, sophisticated throat mike and headset. You take it out and put it on, then hang up the phone.

"Can you hear me?" the Voice says over the headset. You reply, "Yes."

"Now drive as I direct..."

You start up the car as the Voice guides you through the darkened streets toward an area filled with warehouses standing in dark rows. You stop the car in a nearby alley and kill the headlights.

"Go to the third warehouse building," the Voice says. "There's a side entrance with a coded lock, but I'm sure that won't prove too difficult for a woman of your talents."

"Then what?" you ask.

"Get inside, and you'll see," the Voice says. The headset falls silent.

You pause to check your equipment before heading out, your 9mm semiautomatic fully loaded and ready to go. You've also got a small flashlight, and you took the precaution of wearing some light body armor under your dark clothing, just in case. You're as ready as you'll ever be. You just hope that this isn't some kind of trap.

Stepping out of the car, you approach the warehouse carefully. There's no sign of anyone outside. Still, you approach cautiously.

Make a Skill Check: To approach the warehouse unseen, make a Stealth skill check for Diana. It's dark, and Diana is wearing dark clothing, so roll a d20, then roll a d4 and subtract it from the d20 roll. Compare the result to Diana's Stealth skill (11).

- If the roll is a success, go to **1.**
- If the roll is a failure, go to **2.**

1

You make your way cautiously to the warehouse door. It looks like reinforced metal with a small electronic keypad. The door is locked, but you should be able to decode the keypad to get it open.

Make a Complex Skill Check: Diana has to overcome the electronic lock to open the door into the warehouse. Fortunately, she has the Knowledge–*computer operations* skill to allow her to do so. Roll against Diana's skill of 13 with a d20.

Overcoming the computerized lock is a *complex skill check*, so Diana must accumulate more than 1 success. In this case, she must roll skill checks until she achieve 5 successes before rolling 2 failures. Each roll of the dice represents 1 minute of work on the lock. An Ordinary result counts as 1 success, a Good result counts as 2 successes, and an Amazing result counts as 3 successes.

Combat and Damage

Secondary Damage: For every 2 points of mortal damage Diana causes to an opponent, she also inflicts 1 point of wound damage and 1 point of stun damage. For every 2 points of wound damage, she also causes 1 point of stun damage.

Results of Damage: For each point of damage inflicted, mark off one point of durability from a character (stun, wound, or mortal, depending on the type of damage). If all of a character's stuns or wounds are marked off, the character falls unconscious. If all of a character's mortal points are marked off, the character dies.

Recovery: Stun damage is temporary, and any stun damage a character has disappears at the end of a scene. (Each of the numbered sections is one scene.) Wound damage remains until healed by rest and medical attention. Mortal damage requires the use of Medical Science–*surgery* and medical attention to recover.

Armor: Some characters wear armor. After a successful attack, roll to see if the armor protects. For example, Diana's armor offers d6–2 points of protection against high impact (HI) weapons like guns. Any result of 0 or less means no protection. Any positive result is subtracted from the amount of damage inflicted.

Diana Attacks

Diana's Modern Ranged Weapon–*pistol* score is 12. Because the fight with the guard takes place at short range, and the guard has no resistance modifier, roll a d20 and a d4, subtracting the result of the d4 from the d20.

On Diana's hero sheet, notice that the damage for the 9mm pistol is divided into three categories, representing the effects of an Ordinary, Good, and Amazing attack. If you roll higher than Diana's score of 12, the attack misses.

Roll an attack. If successful, roll damage against the guard. So, if Diana rolls a Good attack against the guard, roll d4+2 to determine the number of wounds the guard takes. The guard has a durability of 8 stuns, 8 wounds, and 4 mortals. This is the amount of damage the guard can endure before being knocked out or killed. Note how much damage Diana does to the guard using the boxes below.

Guard #1

Stun	8	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Wound	8	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Mortal	4	☐☐☐☐

The Guard Attacks

If the guard is still able, he can make an attack against Diana. The guard has a skill score of 11 and rolls a d20 and "d0" because of Diana's resistance modifier. If the guard manages to hit, Diana's armor offers some protection. (See "Combat and Damage.") The guard has a 9mm pistol that does the same damage as Diana's: d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m.

◆ If you achieve 2 failure results before achieving 5 successes, go to **8.**

◆ If you achieve 5 successes before accumulating 2 failure results, go to **12.**

2

As you make your way along as quietly as possible, you suddenly spot a guard dressed in a nondescript dark jumpsuit and armed with a 9mm pistol. The guard spots you at the same moment, reaching for his weapon and ordering you to halt. You can't afford to be caught. You'll have to fight

Make an Action Check: Action rounds are broken down into 4 phases. Each phase is about 3 seconds long, enough time for a character to perform a single action. The phases are Amazing, Good, Ordinary, and Marginal, just like the results of skill and action checks. Characters can act in as many phases as they have actions per round, depending on the result of their action checks.

Diana has two actions per round and an action check score of 13. If you roll a Marginal success, she acts only once, in the Marginal phase of the round. If you achieve an Ordinary, Good, or Amazing success, choose which two phases Diana acts in, starting with the phase that matches the degree of success.

The guard acts in the Ordinary phase of each round and can perform only one action.

Using a d20, make an action check for Diana.

◆ If you achieve a Good or Amazing success, go to **3.**

◆ If you achieve an Ordinary success, go to **4.**

◆ If you achieve a Marginal success, go to **5.**

3

You manage to get the drop on the guard before he can draw his weapon, grabbing your own 9mm pistol and taking aim. You can fire two shots before he realizes what's happening.

Make a Skill Check: Diana acts before the guard and can use both of her actions before he can react. First, read "Diana Attacks" in the adjacent sidebar. If the guard survives the first two attacks, then see "The Guard Attacks" and continue with the following rounds until the guard is defeated (go to **6**), or Diana is defeated (go to **7**).

4

You draw your own gun and level it at the guard as he does the same. You only hope that this place has enough budget problems that it can't afford the finest security. Otherwise, this could be a problem.

Make a Skill Check: Diana acts in the same action phase as the guard, the Ordinary phase. See "Diana Attacks" and "The Guard Attacks," then apply damage simultaneously. Continue with the following rounds normally until the guard is defeated (go to **6**), or Diana is defeated (go to **7**).

5

The security guy catches you off guard. As you move to bring your gun to bear, the guard already has his out and trained at you. You're playing for high stakes here, a matter of life or death.

Alternity Science Fiction Roleplaying Game

Solo Adventure Hero Sheet

Diana Hunter

Profession: Free Agent
Career: Hoffmann Institute Field Agent

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res. Mod.
Strength	9	4	0
Dexterity	11	5	+1 step
Constitution	9	4	0
Intelligence	12	6	+1 step
Will	10	4	+1 step
Personality	9	5	0

ACTION CHECK SCORE Actions per round: 2

Marginal 14+ Ordinary 13 Good 6 Amazing 3

DURABILITY

Stun	9	□□□□□□□□□
Wound	9	□□□□□□□□□
Mortal	5	□□□□□

	Skills	Rank	Score (O/G/A)
STR			
	Unarmed attack		9/4/2
DEX			
	Modern Ranged Weapons		11/5/2
	Pistol	1	12/6/3
	Stealth		11/5/2
	Shadow	1	12/6/3
CON			
	Stamina		9/4/2
INT			
	Knowledge		12/6/3
	Computer operation	1	13/6/3
	Deduce	1	13/6/3
	Law		12/6/3
	Law enforcement	1	13/6/3
WIL			
	Administration		10/5/2
	Bureaucracy	1	11/5/2
	Awareness		10/5/2
	Intuition	1	11/5/2
	Investigate		10/5/2
	Interrogate	1	11/5/2
	Research	1	11/5/2
	Search	1	11/5/2
PER			
	Deception		9/4/2
	Bluff	1	10/5/2
	Interaction		9/4/2

Weapons	Damage	Type
9mm pistol	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m	HI

Armor

Battle vest d6–3 (LI), d6–2 (HI), d4–2 (En)

Gear

Identification papers, rental car, cell phone, miniature toolkit, flashlight

Fighting the Guards

Diana has a Modern Ranged Weapons–pistol skill of 12. Roll a d20 and a d4, subtracting the d4 from the d20. If Diana hits, her pistol inflicts the damage listed on her hero sheet.

The guards have Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol* skill of 11 and roll a d20 and a d0 because of Diana's resistance modifier. Their pistols inflict the same damage as Diana's. They each have a durability of 8 stuns, 8 wounds, and 4 mortals.

Guard #2

Stun	8	□□□□□□□□
Wound	8	□□□□□□□□
Mortal	4	□□□□

Guard #3

Stun	8	□□□□□□□□
Wound	8	□□□□□□□□
Mortal	4	□□□□

Guard #4

Stun	8	□□□□□□□□
Wound	8	□□□□□□□□
Mortal	4	□□□□

You're just hoping that it doesn't turn out to be your death.

Make a Skill Check: The guard acts before Diana in the Ordinary phase. If Diana survives, then she acts in the Marginal phase of the round. Since she acts in the Marginal phase, Diana gets only one action this round, rather than two.

First see "The Guard Attacks" and make the necessary rolls there. Then move on to "Diana Attacks" to resolve her action. Continue with the following and subsequent rounds until the guard is defeated (go to **6**), or Diana is defeated (go to **7**).

6

Your shot catches the guard and spins him to the side. He crumples to the floor in a heap, his gun dropping from his hand. You holster your pistol and keep heading for the door of the warehouse. You only hope that you haven't already raised the alarm.

◆ Go to **1**.

7

Burning pain stabs through you, and the world seems to tilt out from under you as you spin and drop toward the ground. As you start to black out, you hear the Voice speaking to you over the headset. "Diana? Diana, what's happening? I need your help. You don't know what they've done to me. Please ..."

The desperate plea is the last thing you hear as the darkness smothers your senses and overtakes you completely.

The End

8

You work feverishly over the electronic keypad to decipher the code to enter the warehouse complex. First, you try cross-circuiting the system, but you must have picked the wrong wires. A red light flashes at the top of the panel and you step back from it in alarm. Suddenly, a security guard comes running around the corner. He spots you and charges in your direction.

Make an Action Check: The security guard acts in the Ordinary phase and has one action. Roll a d20 for Diana's action check.

◆ If you achieve a Good or Amazing success, go to **9**.

◆ If you achieve an Ordinary Success, go to **10**.

◆ If you achieve a Marginal Success, go to **11**.

9

When the guard comes charging around the corner, you're ready for him. You fire twice at him before he even has a chance to react. If you can take him down quickly, this mission might still sixceed.

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana acts twice before the guard, then the guard returns fire in the Ordinary phase, if he is still alive and able to act. Continue the combat until the guard is defeated (go to **12**) or Diana is defeated (go to **7**).

10

The guard is expecting trouble, but he doesn't know who he's dealing with here. You only hope you're the better shot as you both level your weapons at each other and fire.

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana and the guard act at the same time, in the Ordinary phase. Then Diana acts again in the Marginal phase. Continue the combat until the guard is defeated (go to **12**) or Diana is defeated (go to **7**).

11

The sudden appearance of the guard throws you off-balance, and you turn toward him just as the guard raises his gun at you and fires. You just hope that he's a lousy shot.

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar to resolve combat. The guard acts first in the Ordinary phase. Then Diana acts in the Marginal phase. She gets only one of her usual two actions this round. Continue the combat until the guard is defeated (go to **12**) or Diana is defeated (go to **7**).

12

You manage to override the computerized locking mechanism on the door and get it open. Behind it is a nondescript corridor lit with pale fluorescent lights. You close the door carefully behind you and look around. No one is in sight.

"Okay," you whisper into your throat mike. "I'm inside. Now what?"

"There's a way to close down the security systems from in here," the Voice says in your ear. "I'll guide you. Go down the hall, take a right, and go to the first door on the right. That's the security station. There should be two guards on duty there."

Following the Voice's directions, you move quickly and quietly down the hall, pressing flat against the wall to avoid being seen. You gently grasp the knob and twist, then fling open the door and level your pistol into the room. The two guards inside react with surprise.

Make a Surprise Check: When it is possible for one side to get the drop on the other, a surprise check is required. Make an Awareness–*intuition* check for the guards (their target score is 8).

◆ If the guards fail the surprise check, go to **13**.

◆ If the guards make the surprise check, go to **14**.

13

You've caught the guards by surprise. Before they can even blink, you have a chance to fire off a shot.

If an opponent fails a surprise check, a special phase called the Surprise phase is added to the beginning of the combat round. Diana can take one action in this phase, then the normal round begins. See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar, then go to **14**.

14

Two guards, one of you—not very even odds. But then, you're hardly going to let them go and get more guards to even things out!

Make an Action Check: The security guards act in the Ordinary phase and have one action each. Make an action check for Diana using a d20.

◆ If you achieve a Good or Amazing success, go to **15**.

◆ If you achieve an Ordinary success, go to **16**.

◆ If you achieve a Marginal success, go to **17**.

15

The guards are reacting fast, but not fast enough! You fire twice before either of them manages to regain his bearings and return fire at you..

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana acts in the Amazing and Good phases, or in the Good and Ordinary phases, while the guards return fire in the Ordinary phase, if they are still able.

Continue until the guards are defeated (go to **18**) or Diana is defeated (go to **7**).

"The guards are neutralized," you say into your throat-mike.

16

The guards recover from their surprise fairly quickly, drawing their weapons and opening fire on you. You have some cover from the doorway and return fire.

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana acts in the Ordinary phase along with the guards, then again in the Marginal phase.

Continue until the guards are defeated (go to **18**) or Diana is defeated (go to **7**).

17

The guards' surprise lasts for only a moment, then they're moving into action instantly. You're caught a little off guard by their sudden response, and they both shoot at you before you can return fire.

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar to resolve combat. The guards go first in the Ordinary phase, then Diana acts in the Marginal phase, if she is still conscious. Diana actsonly once this round.

Continue until the guards are defeated (go to **18**) or Diana is defeated (go to **7**).

18

After taking down the guards, you check out the security console in the room. You should be able to shut down the security systems from here, enough to give you access to the rest of the facility.

"The guards are neutralized," you say into your throat-mike.

"Good work," the Voice says. "Now you can deal with the security systems. Don't shut them down; there's another option. Just do as I tell you."

"How did you know I was thinking about shutting the system down?" you ask.

"There's no time to explain," the Voice replies. "Trust me."

Yeah, sure, "trust you," you think. Your fingers fly over the keyboard as you set to work.

Make a Complex Skill Check: To overcome the security countermeasures, Diana must override the computer's security lockouts and make some programming adjustments. This is a complex skill check using her Knowledge–*computer operations* skill. Diana is getting some help from the Voice for this one, so she gains a positive situation die. Roll a d20 and a d8

Fighting the Technician

Diana's Unarmed Attack skill is 9. Roll a d20 and a d4 (for using a broad skill). Add the result of the d4 to the d20. If she hits, her unarmed attack inflicts the following damage: d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s. She can also choose to draw her gun, but she takes a d4 penalty drawing and firing in the same action; roll a d4 and add it to the result on the d20.

The technician has an Unarmed Attack score of 8 and inflicts the same damage as Diana's attack. Roll a d20 plus a d4 for his skill check. The technician has a durability of 6 stuns, 6 wounds, and 3 mortals. He is otherwise unarmed. Unarmed attack damage is considered low impact (LI) for purposes of Diana's armor.

Technician

Stun	6	□□□□□□
Wound	6	□□□□□□
Mortal	3	□□□

against Diana's skill of 13. The roll on the d8 subtracts from the roll on the d20 to determine the result.

Making the necessary changes to the system is a complex skill check. Diana needs to accumulate 8 successes before she accumulates 3 failures. Each roll of the dice represents 30 seconds of work in this situation. An Ordinary result counts as 1 success, a Good result counts as 2 successes, and an Amazing result counts as 3 successes.

◆ If you achieve 3 failure results before earning 8 successes, go to **19**.

◆ If you achieve 8 successes before earning 3 failure results, go to **20**.

19

Once you make the modifications to the security system as the Voice instructs, you put on a white lab coat you find in the closet, right where the Voice said it would be. Slipping your pistol and headset into the large side pockets and clipping a security pass from one of the guards on the breast pocket, you make your way down the hall as you've been instructed, passing various closed-off doors marked with security warning signs. You spot the door the Voice mentioned at the end of the corridor. Just then, the door opens and a white-coated technician steps out into the corridor.

He eyes you suspiciously as you approach. You prepare to hand him a line and your pass when he suddenly holds out a hand.

"Hold it right there," he says.

◆ Go to **21**.

20

Once you make the modifications to the security system as the Voice instructs, you put on a white lab coat you find in the closet, right where the Voice said it would be. Slipping your pistol and headset into the large side pockets and clipping a security pass from one of the guards on the breast pocket, you make your way down the hall as you've been instructed, passing various closed doors marked with security warning signs. You spot the door the Voice mentioned at the end of the corridor. Just then, the door opens and a white-coated technician steps out into the corridor.

He eyes you suspiciously as you approach. You smile and hope your security modifications pass muster.

"Transport orders," you mutter, indicating your pass with a wave

Make a Skill Check: Diana has to bluff her way past the technician. Make a skill check against Diana's Deception–*bluff* score of 10. The technician has no resistance modifier, and Diana's disguise and adjustments to the security system give her a situation die bonus of d8. Roll a d20, then roll a d8 and subtract the result from the d20 roll. Compare the result against Diana's skill of 10.

◆ If you fail, go to **21**.

◆ If you succeed, go to **22**.

21

The technician glares at you and says, "I don't think you're authorized to be here." He takes a step toward you, giving you a momentary opening.

Make an Action Check: The security technician acts in the Ordinary phase and has one action. Roll a d20 for Diana's action check.

◆ If you achieve a Good or Amazing success, go to **22**.

◆ If you achieve an Ordinary Success, go to **23**.

◆ If you achieve a Marginal Success, go to **24**.

22

When the technician moves toward you, you get the drop on him. You use a karate move to take him down.

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Technician" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana acts twice before the technician, then the technician attacks in the Ordinary phase, if he is still alive and able to act. If you want, Diana can draw her gun using one of her actions to fire at the technician. Continue the combat until Diana or the technician defeats the other.

◆ If Diana defeats the technician, go to **25**.

◆ If the technician defeats Diana, go to **7**.

23

The technician is expecting trouble, but he doesn't know just what kind of trouble he's got on his hands. When he approaches, you lash out with a hand and try to take him down.

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Technician" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana and the technician act at the same time, in the Ordinary phase. Then Diana acts again in the Marginal phase. Continue the combat until Diana or the technician prevails.

◆ If Diana defeats the technician, go to **25**.

◆ If the technician defeats Diana, go to **7**.

24

You make your move, but the technician sees it coming and tries to hit you. It looks like he's taken a few self-defense courses, but you're better.

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Technician" sidebar to resolve combat. The technician acts first in the Ordinary phase. Then Diana acts in the Marginal phase. She gets only one of her usual two actions this round. Continue

the combat until Diana or the technician wins.

◆ If Diana defeats the technician, go to **25**.

◆ If the technician defeats Diana, go to **7**.

25

Getting past the technician, you open the door and move into the room. It's dimly lit with fluorescent tubes running along the ceiling, filled with a strong smell of antiseptic and the faint bubbling and humming of machinery. There's no one else inside as you sweep the room with your gaze. You come to the rear wall of the room and stop dead in your tracks.

Resting on top of a complex bank of machinery is a row of three glass jars filled with a greenish liquid that gurgles and bubbles slightly. Inside of each jar, connected to the bottom by trailing wires, is a human brain, floating freely in the liquid. As you stand and stare in shock at the disembodied brains, you hear the Voice speaking to you again.

"Hello, Diana," it says. "I'm glad you're finally here. I knew you couldn't resist a mystery."

Your hand automatically reaches up to touch the headset when you realize that it's still in the pocket of your lab coat. The Voice is coming entirely from inside your head.

"Who … what are you?" you ask, "and how do you know about me?"

"I knew you'd come because it's what I would have done," the Voice says. "You see, Diana, I am you. The real you."

◆ Continue with **26**.

26

"What?" you exclaim. You've seen some weird stuff in your time working for the Institute, but never a brain in a jar that claimed to be you.

"It's true," the Voice says. "You're the result of an experiment in cloning and memory implantation. I'm the real Diana Hunter. I was investigating this project when I slipped up and got captured. As far as I can tell, they removed my brain from my body and created a clone duplicate, programmed with my memories, to infiltrate the Institute. That's you.

"Hello, Diana," it says. "I'm glad you're finally here."

"There's a tiny implant in your brain that allows them to send you commands. You're working for the enemy, Diana, and you don't even know it.

"What they underestimated was the power of the human brain. Somehow, outside of our bodies, we've learned to harness certain mental abilities, the way I'm speaking with you now. They allowed us to learn things about the project, and to make certain things happen. They also allowed me to contact you and convince you to come here. I'm sorry to trick you, but I couldn't tell you the truth."

"Obviously," you mutter. "Do you really expect me to believe this?"

"It doesn't matter what you believe," the Voice says. "You're here, and we need your help."

"To do what?"

"To put an end to our existence. We need you to shut down the equipment here so we can finally escape from this half-life. I know you don't want us to suffer, Diana, because that's not what I would want."

"Will you stop saying that!" you reply. "You're not me!"

"Believe whatever you want," the Voice says. "But will you help us?"

◆ If you agree to help, go to **27**.

◆ If you refuse to help, go to **32**.

27

"All right. I'll do it," you say.

"Thank you," a chorus of Voices replies in your mind. Suddenly you know how to shut down the equipment in the room. You start moving toward the control panel when you hear a noise from the doorway.

"Hold it right there, Diana," a familiar voice says. "Don't do anything foolish." You spin to see a figure standing in front of the door, holding a 9mm pistol leveled in your direction. A cruel smile crosses her face as you face off against … yourself.

Fighting the Doppelganger

Diana's opponent has the exact same skill and ability scores as she does. See Diana's hero sheet for this information. The duplicate is armed with a 9mm pistol that does the same damage as Diana's, but she is not wearing any armor. Since both Diana and her double have a +1 resistance modifier for their Dexterity, roll a d4 and add it to the d20 when making Modern Ranged Weapons–pistol skill checks for either of them in the fight.

Doppelganger

Stun	9	□□□□□□□□□
Wound	9	□□□□□□□□□
Mortal	5	□□□□□

Make an Action Check: Diana's duplicate acts in the Good and Ordinary phases. Roll a d20 for Diana's action check.

- ◆ If you achieve an Amazing success, go to **28**.
- ◆ If you achieve a Good success, go to **29**.
- ◆ If you achieve an Ordinary Success, go to **30**.
- ◆ If you achieve a Marginal Success, go to **31**.

28

Although you're confused by all that you've seen and heard, you don't hesitate when faced with danger. You spin toward your doppelganger and bring up your pistol. Your sudden burst of action seems to have startled her. Funny, you think you'd be smarter than that.

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Doppelganger" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana acts before her double in the Amazing phase, then again in the Good phase. The duplicate Diana acts first in the Good phase, if she is still alive and able to act. Continue the combat until one character wins.

- ◆ If the duplicate is defeated, go to **33**.
- ◆ If Diana is defeated, go to **7**.

29

You and your double move at the same time, almost like mirror images of each other. You try to figure out how this could possibly be, but you're too busy fighting for your life at the moment. Let's just hope she's not as good as you are, or at least not as lucky.

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Doppelganger" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana and her duplicate act at the same time, in the Good and Ordinary phases. Continue the combat until one character wins.

- ◆ If the duplicate is defeated, go to **33**.
- ◆ If Diana is defeated, go to **7**.

30

You make a move, but your duplicate has the drop on you. She shoots once before you can bring your own weapon to bear. You hope she's not as good a shot as you are.

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Doppelganger" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana's duplicate acts first, in the Good phase, then again in the Ordinary phase with Diana. Continue the combat until one character wins.

- ◆ If the duplicate is defeated, go to **33**.
- ◆ If Diana is defeated, go to **7**.

31

Too slow! You're too confused by what's going on here. Even as you start to move, your doppelganger starts shooting at you. The Voice speaks loudly in your head "Get it together, Diana! Don't give up now!"

Make a Skill Check: See the "Fighting the Doppelganger" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana's duplicate acts first, in the Good and Ordinary phases. Diana acts in the Marginal phase (if she is still able) and gets only one action this round. Continue the combat until one character wins.

- ◆ If the duplicate is defeated, go to **33**.
- ◆ If Diana is defeated, go to **7**.

32

"I'm sorry, Diana, but you give us no choice," the Voice says in your head. Suddenly you feel a powerful stabbing pain in your mind as the disembodied brains try to force their will upon you. You try to concentrate and shut them out. What were you thinking? Oh, yes, that's right...

- ◆ Go to **27**.

33

As your duplicate drops to the floor, you become aware of a snapping and crackling sound. You turn to see that a couple of stray shots have damaged some of the machinery. Leaking chemicals pouring onto the floor ignite in a whoosh of flames, sending a searing wave of heat across the room to slap you in the face. Fire alarms suddenly begin blaring inside the complex.

"Run, Diana!" the Voice says in your mind. "Save yourself! There's nothing more you can do for us." You begin to protest, but you realize that it's true. There's nothing you can do. You head out of the room, pausing for a moment by the door to look back at the disembodied brains, then down at your double, lying on the floor. Then you turn and don't look back.

The place is in chaos, so it's an easy matter for you to slip past the guards and make it outside. By the time you're out of the complex, the fire appears to be spreading rapidly. You make it to your car and call the fire department on your cell phone. When the authorities show up, some people are going to have a lot of explaining to do. They'll manage to cover it up—they always do—but at least the people involved in this project will know that someone is on to them.

As you drive away from the darkened warehouse, with flames and smoke rising from one side, you hear a faint voice speak into your mind.

"Thank you, Diana. Thank you for our freedom. Take your life and live it well." The Voice fades and is gone. You may never know for sure if what it told you is true, but you plan to find out.

What happens next? Pick up a copy of the Dark•Matter campaign setting and search for the truth!

Stephen Kenson is a freelance writer and a fan of conspiracy theories and high weirdness. He's fairly sure that he's really who he thinks he is, although he occasionally has doubts.

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DMDA98

TRANSMISSIONS

By Andy Collins, JD Wiker, and Jeff "Zippy" Quick

Starting this month, we'll bring you new mission hooks for your DARK•MATTER™ and STAR*DRIVE® campaigns. Along with a player handout to begin the scenario, each "Transmission" includes hints for the Gamemaster to develop into a complete adventure. If one of these missions takes your campaign in an unexpected direction, let us know the results by sending your own transmission to **dmail@wizards.com**.

Milwaukee Tribune • Monday, November 1, 1999 **E3**

AUTHORITIES EXPLAIN AWAY SIGHTINGS

Kenosha, WI [AP] — Local authorities continue to claim that the bright lights seen in the night sky by local residents over the past few months come from low-flying planes or helicopters and that residents need not suspect anything out of the ordinary.

"We've had some recent changes in traditional flight paths at local airports," explained police spokesperson Tabitha Wickman. "This leads to unfamiliar lights, which at night could easily seem unusual or unexplainable."

Military officials refused to comment on the matter, stating that they "can neither confirm nor deny the presence of experimental military aircraft" in the Kenosha area.

One resident, 53-year-old Roger Maxwell, insisted that the official explanation didn't hold water. "I was in 'Nam, and I know what a helicopter sounds like," claimed Maxwell. "I didn't hear no rotor sounds, so unless they [have] some new Hueys that don't [have] rotors, that wasn't no helicopter."

Long-time residents note that this isn't the first rash of UFO sightings the area has experienced. In fact, the Chicago-Milwaukee-Madison area experienced several UFO-related "scares" in the mid and late 1970s. Those were generally explained away as mistaken sightings of weather balloons or small planes.

Local resident Susan Moeller captured this shot of the incident.

Gamemaster Hints

This transmission provides the heroes with the perfect excuse to go on a UFO hunt. Of course, what's really behind the sightings is up to the Gamemaster. (Deviousness is encouraged.) Some possibilities include the following:

- U.N. black helicopters spreading chemicals or viruses through the air.
- Secret military aircraft on routine training maneuvers.
- Illicit air deliveries of contraband to local airfields.
- Foreign aircraft operating out of a secret base, either under Lake Michigan or across the Canadian border.
- Alien spacecraft abducting innocent civilians, delivering emissaries, or shuttling personnel between bases.

DARK•MATTER™

GRIDWIDE NEWSFEED

>> ROGUE TELEPATH ESCAPES CONCORD PRISON <<

Concord authorities report a rogue mindwalker, **Tanmay Bakx, has escaped from prison on Hale.** Bakx is a blond human male, 5 feet, 9 inches tall, who possesses strong psionic abilities. **Common aliases: James Tanner and Mason Baksel.** Tanmay has demonstrated advanced telepathic and biokinetic abilities. **He is known to be dangerous** and believed to be heading for Verge space. **Concord Adminstrators advise caution** if traveling between Old Space and the Verge in the next two weeks. **Dr. Bejide Jorgensun, a Concord specialist in Mindwalker psychology, has this bit of advice:** "Citizens should report to a Concord Adminstrator if they experience any unusual blackouts, lost time, or suspicious people in their neighborhoods."

Jorgensun continued, "Tanmay was raised and educated in Hatire Community space. In a crowd he can be identified by his disdain of technology and avoidance of guns or more complex electronics."

Gamemaster Hints

Bakx can have whatever psionic skills you want to give him, at whatever skill ranks seem appropriate. He will be looking for discreet transportation across the Verge to a destination of your choice. A group of heroes with their own ship or extra cargo space are a likely target.

Potential stories or side adventures include:

- Bakx might approach and attempt to buy passage wherever the heroes are headed. Maybe he just wants a ride, and the Concord tracks him to your heroes' ship. Maybe he wants to hijack their ship.
- Bakx might be hunting someone for a past wrong. That someone might be the same person the PCs need to talk to.
- The Concord might be playing down the threat Bakx presents to avoid panic. Bakx could be homicidally insane, killing every weren he sees, or worse yet, anyone he thinks looks like a weren!
- Having someone who can play with perceptions can challenge even wary heroes. Perhaps Bakx is near the heroes while they read this newsfeed, altering their perceptions of what they read. In that case, nearly anything could be true.

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Convention Calendar

November

Carnage on the Mountain

November 5–7 **VT**
Ascutney Mountain Resort,
Ascutney, VT.
Contact: Carnage on the Mountain,
64 County Road-Hartland,
Windsor, VT 05089.
Website: members.aol.com/
carnagecon/index.htm
Email: carnagecon@aol.com

Pentacon 15

November 13–15 **IN**
Grand Wayne Convention Center,
Fort Wayne, IN.
Contact: Pentacon, P.O. Box 10427,
Fort Wayne, IN 46856.
Website: www2.fwi.com/~dht/
pentacon
Email: dht@fwi.com

January

EveCon 17

January 7–9 **VA**
Mc Lean Hilton, Tyson's Corner, VA.
Contact: FanTek, 1607 Thomas Road,
Friendly, MD 20744.
Email: bruce@fantek.org

February

SheVaCon

February 4–6 **VA**
Roanoke Airport Marriott, Roanoke, VA.
Contact: SheVaCon,
P.O. Box 416, Verona, VA 24482-0416.
Email: sheva@adelphina.net

March

Stellar Con 24

March 17–19 **NC**
Ramada Inn and Conference Center,
High Point, North Carolina.
Contact: StellarCon 24, Box 4,
Elliott University Center, UNCG,
Greensboro, NC 27412.
Website: www.uncg.edu/
student.groups/sf3/stelllarcon.htm

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON® Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

❖ Australian convention
✳ Canadian convention
✪ European convention
💻 Online convention

MIND BLAST Solution: King Kong (Ping Pong)

Gamer's Guide

Knights of the Dinner Table™

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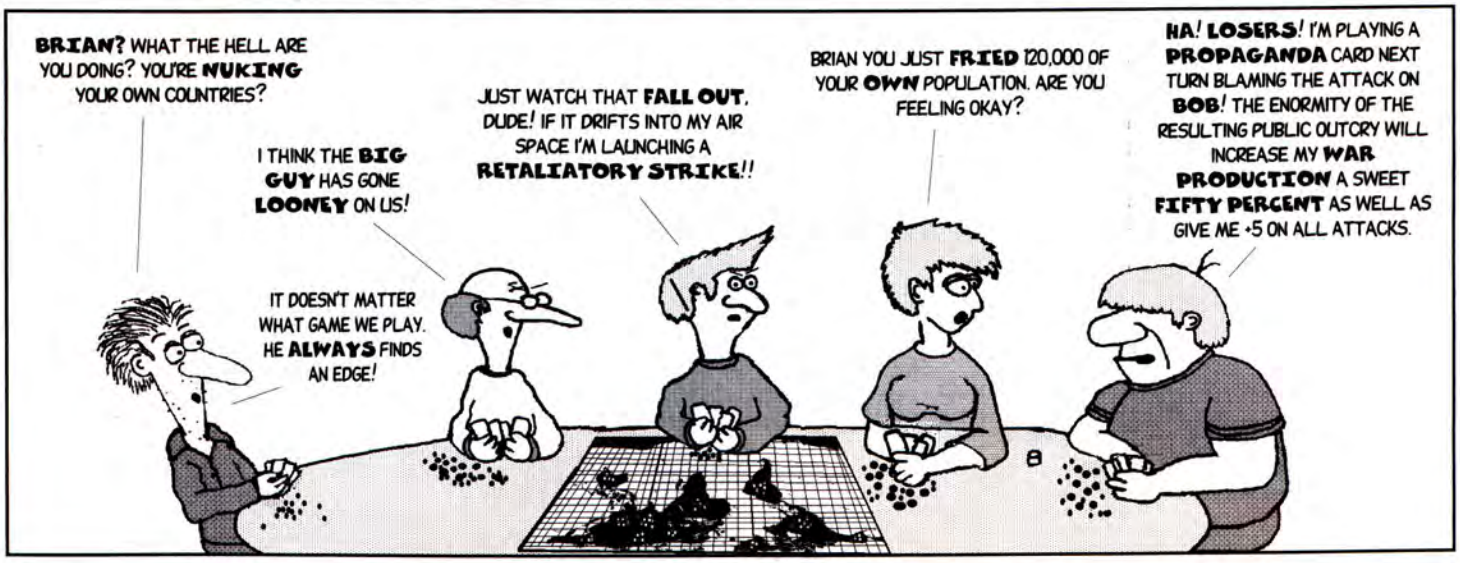
BRIAN? WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING? YOU'RE NUKING YOUR OWN COUNTRIES?
I THINK THE BIG GUY HAS GONE LOONEY ON US!
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT GAME WE PLAY. HE ALWAYS FINDS AN EDGE!
JUST WATCH THAT FALL OUT, DUDE! IF IT DRIFTS INTO MY AIR SPACE I'M LAUNCHING A RETALIATORY STRIKE!!
BRIAN YOU JUST FRIED 120,000 OF YOUR OWN POPULATION. ARE YOU FEELING OKAY?
HA! LOSERS! I'M PLAYING A PROPAGANDA CARD NEXT TURN BLAMING THE ATTACK ON BOB! THE ENORMITY OF THE RESULTING PUBLIC OUTCRY WILL INCREASE MY WAR PRODUCTION A SWEET FIFTY PERCENT AS WELL AS GIVE ME +5 ON ALL ATTACKS.

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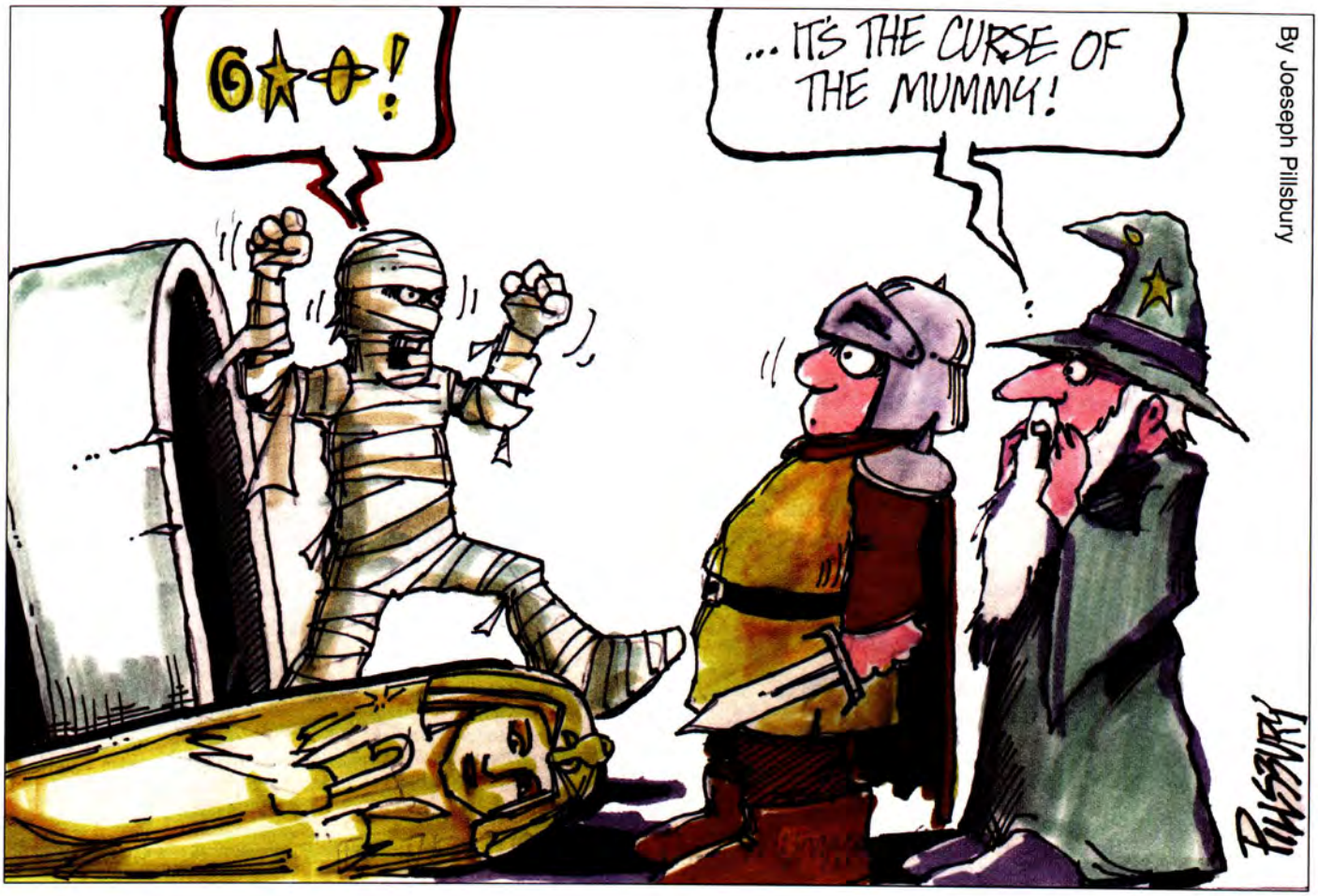
Dragon Mirth™

By Peter Delgado, Jr.



MIND BLAST

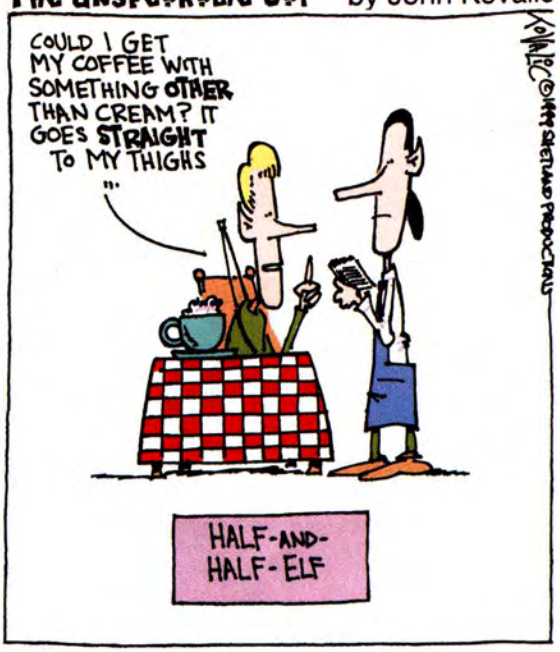
If you swap all the M's in the word MUMMY for P's, you get the much less terrifying PUPPY. So try this out: Take the name of a very famous monster from the movies. Switch all the occrrences of one letter for P's and you'll get a sport. What's the monster?

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 102.

By Aaron Williams

"It's part of our new 'Family Friendly' policy."

The UNSPEAKABLE OAF by John Kovalic

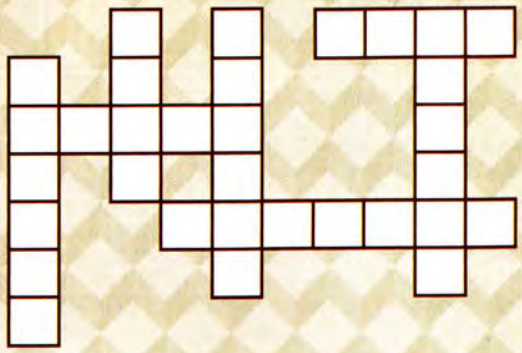


MIND FLAYERS

no. 6

by Mike Selinker

All you need to do is unscramble the seven words in the list and insert them into the grid, one letter per space. If you have problems doing that, try figuring out what the words have in common and go from there. As a hint, they all have something to do with the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game.

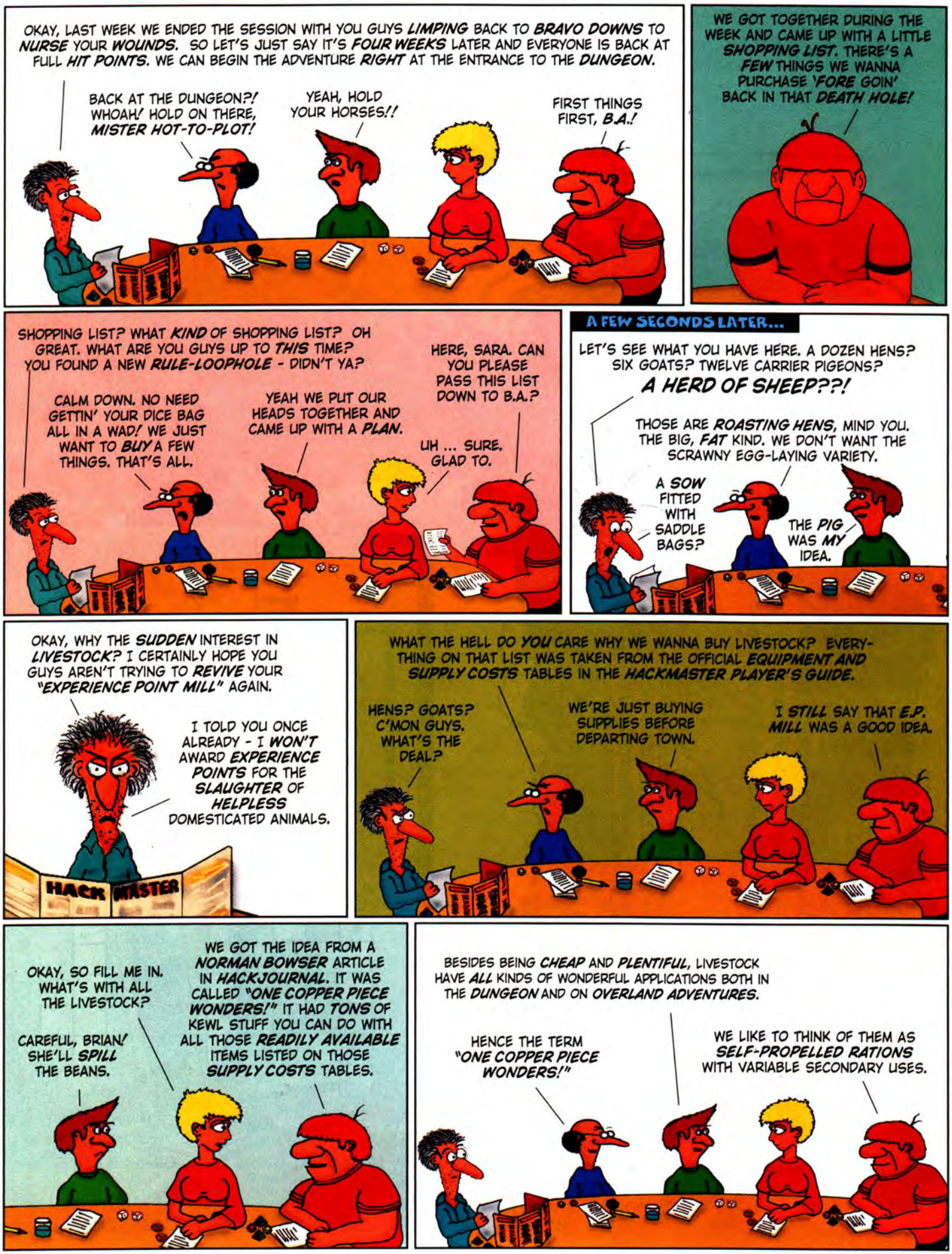


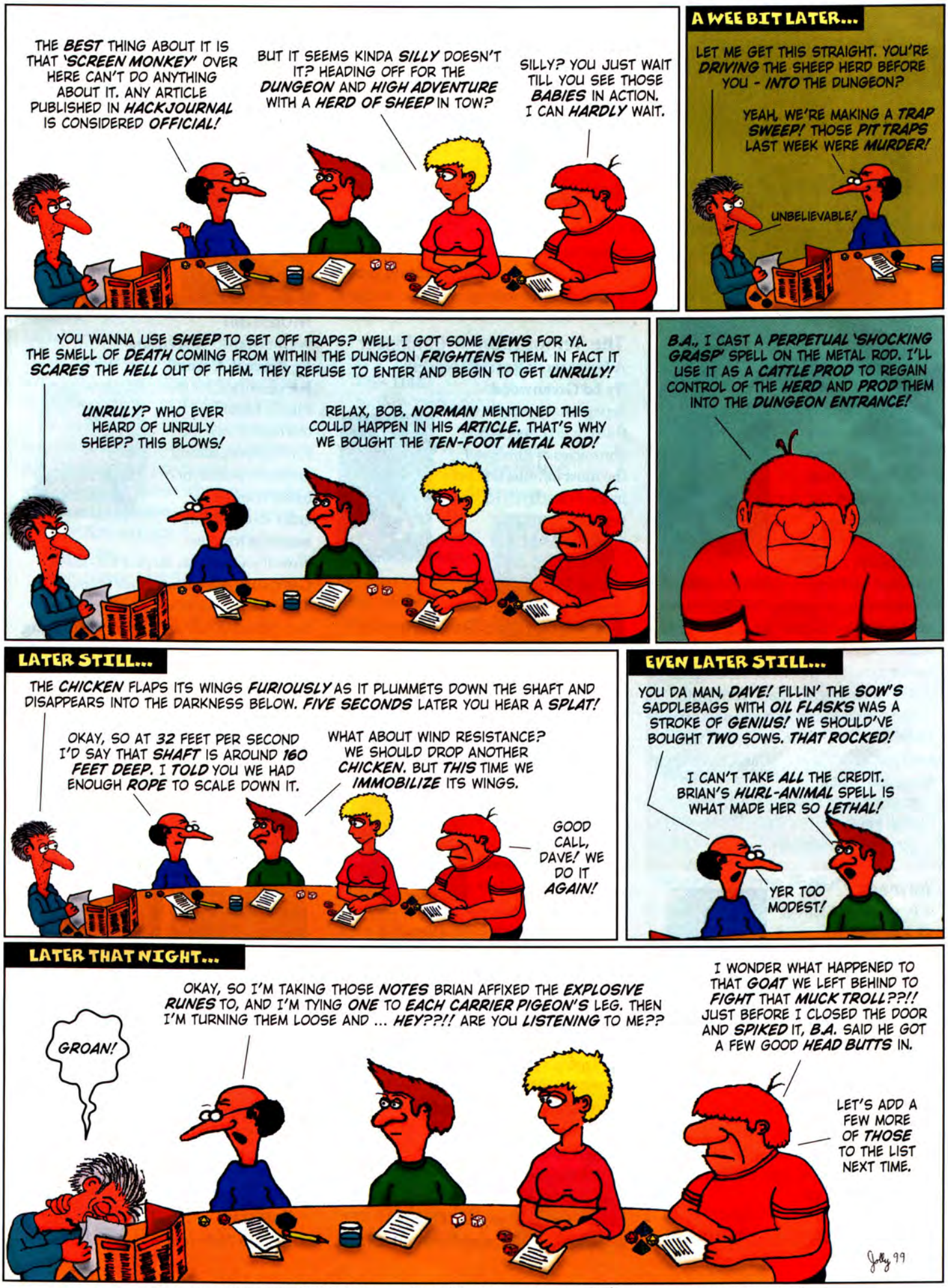
WORD LIST

Circle, Drab, Freight, Game, Garner, Rouge, Sprite

Knights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
WITH STEVE JOHANSSON AND ERICK KENDALL


OKAY, LAST WEEK WE ENDED THE SESSION WITH YOU GUYS LIMPING BACK TO BRAVO DOWNS TO NURSE YOUR WOUNDS. SO LET'S JUST SAY IT'S FOUR WEEKS LATER AND EVERYONE IS BACK AT FULL HIT POINTS. WE CAN BEGIN THE ADVENTURE RIGHT AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE DUNGEON.
BACK AT THE DUNGEON?! WHOAH! HOLD ON THERE, MISTER HOT-TO-PLOT!
YEAH, HOLD YOUR HORSES!!
FIRST THINGS FIRST, B.A.!
WE GOT TOGETHER DURING THE WEEK AND CAME UP WITH A LITTLE SHOPPING LIST. THERE'S A FEW THINGS WE WANNA PURCHASE 'FORE GOIN' BACK IN THAT DEATH HOLE!
SHOPPING LIST? WHAT KIND OF SHOPPING LIST? OH GREAT. WHAT ARE YOU GUYS UP TO THIS TIME? YOU FOUND A NEW RULE-LOOPHOLE - DIDN'T YA?
CALM DOWN. NO NEED GETTIN' YOUR DICE BAG ALL IN A WAD! WE JUST WANT TO BUY A FEW THINGS. THAT'S ALL.
YEAH WE PUT OUR HEADS TOGETHER AND CAME UP WITH A PLAN.
HERE, SARA. CAN YOU PLEASE PASS THIS LIST DOWN TO B.A.?
UH ... SURE. GLAD TO.
A FEW SECONDS LATER...
LET'S SEE WHAT YOU HAVE HERE. A DOZEN HENS? SIX GOATS? TWELVE CARRIER PIGEONS?
A HERD OF SHEEP??!
THOSE ARE ROASTING HENS, MIND YOU. THE BIG, FAT KIND. WE DON'T WANT THE SCRAWNY EGG-LAYING VARIETY.
A SOW FITTED WITH SADDLE BAGS?
THE PIG WAS MY IDEA.
OKAY, WHY THE SUDDEN INTEREST IN LIVESTOCK? I CERTAINLY HOPE YOU GUYS AREN'T TRYING TO REVIVE YOUR "EXPERIENCE POINT MILL" AGAIN.
I TOLD YOU ONCE ALREADY - I WON'T AWARD EXPERIENCE POINTS FOR THE SLAUGHTER OF HELPLESS DOMESTICATED ANIMALS.
HACK MASTER
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU CARE WHY WE WANNA BUY LIVESTOCK? EVERYTHING ON THAT LIST WAS TAKEN FROM THE OFFICIAL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY COSTS TABLES IN THE HACKMASTER PLAYER'S GUIDE.
HENS? GOATS? C'MON GUYS. WHAT'S THE DEAL?
WE'RE JUST BUYING SUPPLIES BEFORE DEPARTING TOWN.
I STILL SAY THAT E.P. MILL WAS A GOOD IDEA.
OKAY, SO FILL ME IN. WHAT'S WITH ALL THE LIVESTOCK?
CAREFUL, BRIAN! SHE'LL SPILL THE BEANS.
WE GOT THE IDEA FROM A NORMAN BOWSER ARTICLE IN HACKJOURNAL. IT WAS CALLED "ONE COPPER PIECE WONDERS!" IT HAD TONS OF KEWL STUFF YOU CAN DO WITH ALL THOSE READILY AVAILABLE ITEMS LISTED ON THOSE SUPPLY COSTS TABLES.
BESIDES BEING CHEAP AND PLENTIFUL, LIVESTOCK HAVE ALL KINDS OF WONDERFUL APPLICATIONS BOTH IN THE DUNGEON AND ON OVERLAND ADVENTURES.
HENCE THE TERM "ONE COPPER PIECE WONDERS!"
WE LIKE TO THINK OF THEM AS SELF-PROPELLED RATIONS WITH VARIABLE SECONDARY USES.


THE BEST THING ABOUT IT IS THAT 'SCREEN MONKEY' OVER HERE CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. ANY ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN HACKJOURNAL IS CONSIDERED OFFICIAL!
BUT IT SEEMS KINDA SILLY DOESN'T IT? HEADING OFF FOR THE DUNGEON AND HIGH ADVENTURE WITH A HERD OF SHEEP IN TOW?
SILLY? YOU JUST WAIT TILL YOU SEE THOSE BABIES IN ACTION. I CAN HARDLY WAIT.
A WEE BIT LATER...
LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT. YOU'RE DRIVING THE SHEEP HERD BEFORE YOU - INTO THE DUNGEON?
YEAH. WE'RE MAKING A TRAP SWEEP! THOSE PIT TRAPS LAST WEEK WERE MURDER!
UNBELIEVABLE!
YOU WANNA USE SHEEP TO SET OFF TRAPS? WELL I GOT SOME NEWS FOR YA. THE SMELL OF DEATH COMING FROM WITHIN THE DUNGEON FRIGHTENS THEM. IN FACT IT SCARES THE HELL OUT OF THEM. THEY REFUSE TO ENTER AND BEGIN TO GET UNRULY!
UNRULY? WHO EVER HEARD OF UNRULY SHEEP? THIS BLOWS!
RELAX, BOB. NORMAN MENTIONED THIS COULD HAPPEN IN HIS ARTICLE. THAT'S WHY WE BOUGHT THE TEN-FOOT METAL ROD!
B.A., I CAST A PERPETUAL 'SHOCKING GRASP' SPELL ON THE METAL ROD. I'LL USE IT AS A CATTLE PROD TO REGAIN CONTROL OF THE HERD AND PROD THEM INTO THE DUNGEON ENTRANCE!
LATER STILL...
THE CHICKEN FLAPS ITS WINGS FURIOUSLY AS IT PLUMMETS DOWN THE SHAFT AND DISAPPEARS INTO THE DARKNESS BELOW. FIVE SECONDS LATER YOU HEAR A SPLAT!
OKAY, SO AT 32 FEET PER SECOND I'D SAY THAT SHAFT IS AROUND 160 FEET DEEP. I TOLD YOU WE HAD ENOUGH ROPE TO SCALE DOWN IT.
WHAT ABOUT WIND RESISTANCE? WE SHOULD DROP ANOTHER CHICKEN. BUT THIS TIME WE IMMOBILIZE ITS WINGS.
GOOD CALL, DAVE! WE DO IT AGAIN!
EVEN LATER STILL...
YOU DA MAN, DAVE! FILLIN' THE SOW'S SADDLEBAGS WITH OIL FLASKS WAS A STROKE OF GENIUS! WE SHOULD'VE BOUGHT TWO SOWS. THAT ROCKED!
I CAN'T TAKE ALL THE CREDIT. BRIAN'S HURL-ANIMAL SPELL IS WHAT MADE HER SO LETHAL!
YER TOO MODEST!
LATER THAT NIGHT...
GROAN!
OKAY, SO I'M TAKING THOSE NOTES BRIAN AFFIXED THE EXPLOSIVE RUNES TO, AND I'M TYING ONE TO EACH CARRIER PIGEON'S LEG. THEN I'M TURNING THEM LOOSE AND ... HEY??!! ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME??
I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT GOAT WE LEFT BEHIND TO FIGHT THAT MUCK TROLL??!! JUST BEFORE I CLOSED THE DOOR AND SPIKED IT, B.A. SAID HE GOT A FEW GOOD HEAD BUTTS IN.
LET'S ADD A FEW MORE OF THOSE TO THE LIST NEXT TIME.
Jolly 99

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Send story ideas to jollyrb@aol.com or KODT, 1003 Monroe Pike, Marion, IN 46953

Previews

NOVEMBER

DARK•MATTER™

An ALTERNITY® Game Campaign Setting
By Wolfgang Baur with Monte Cook

In the modern day, not everything is as it appears. Paranormal occurrences and occult activities are becoming commonplace. These events are quickly hidden from public view by various world governments and other organizations who have no understanding of their significance. Doorways to other worlds are opening, and it's up to the heroes of the Hoffmann Institute to determine friend from foe, good from evil, and conspiracy from happenstance.

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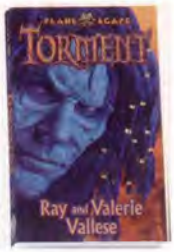
By Ray and Valerie Vallese



An action-packed novelization of the computer game from Interplay. A hero stricken with amnesia wanders through the planes in search of his identity, battling strange demons and treacherous companions. The *Torment* computer game follows on the success of the best-selling *Baldur's Gate*, also from Interplay.

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The Temptation of Elminster

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An ALTERNITY Accessory
By JD Wiker

This comprehensive guide expands the psionics rules from the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook*, adding new skills and powers, providing guidelines for incorporating psionics into different science fiction genres, and providing integrated material for both the STAR*DRIVE® and DARK•MATTER campaign settings.

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The Guide to Hell provides a wealth of information for Dungeon Masters who want to set an adventure or an entire campaign in the Nine Hells. This groundbreaking accessory contains information on the layers of Hell, statistics for its rulers and notable figures, infernal spells, powerful magical items, and new devil-slayer kits for those players who have dreamed of storming the gates of this diabolic realm!

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Drizzt Do'Urden's Guide to the Underdark

A FORGOTTEN REALMS Accessory
By Eric L. Boyd

It's been a while since the famous drow ranger ventured into his native Underdark, but he hasn't forgotten that he has many enemies there, and chances are they haven't forgotten about him either. Hence, Drizzt has called upon various friends to bring him reports concerning the drow, duergar, illithid, derro, aboleth, kuo-toa, svirfneblin, and dwarves as well as the cities of the Underdark where they dwell. Drizzt includes notes on the tricks of survival in the Underdark, making this product an excellent guide for adventurers who wish to take their campaigns into "the night below."

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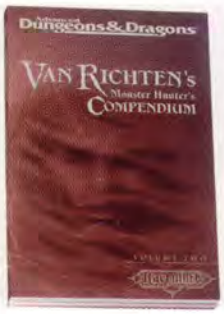
DECEMBER

Van Richten's Monster Hunter's Compendium, Volume Two

An AD&D Accessory,
By TSR Staff



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The Aegis system is central to every STAR*DRIVE campaign; this product is a must-have for any STAR*DRIVE game player.

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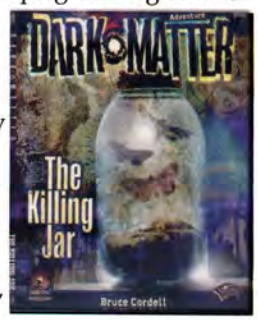
The Killing Jar

A DARK•MATTER Adventure
By Bruce R. Cordell



This first stand-alone adventure for the DARK•MATTER campaign setting reveals a disturbing reality beneath the blissful ignorance of everyday life. A case of grand theft auto quickly escalates into a more serious investigation, leading heroes to a sinister forensics lab, a forgotten burial mound, and into a conspiracy of lies best left buried.

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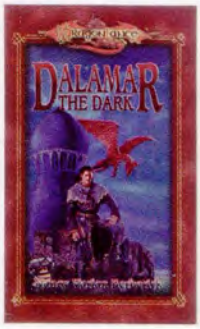

A talent for magic runs like fire through the blood of the elf Dalamar Argent. He is only a servant in the house of an elvish lord, not worthy of the high art of sorcery and denied all but the most grudging education. Yet Dalamar cannot—will not—deny his talent. As war simmers on the borders of Silvanesti, Dalamar must find a way to become a wizard. His quest takes him along dark paths toward an awesome destiny.

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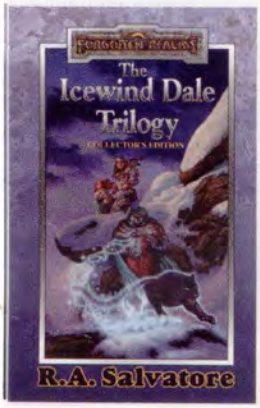
A FORGOTTEN REALMS Novel Collection
By R. A. Salvatore



Here, in a single volume, are the three novels that launched R. A. Salvatore as a major voice in fantasy fiction and introduced the character of Drizzt Do'Urden, the dark elf who struggles under the awful burden of his evil heritage. This one volume includes *The Crystal Shard*, *Streams of Silver*, and *The Halfling's Gem*. From his birth in the hideous underground city of Menzoberranzan, where murder and treachery are common coin, to the high passes of Icewind Dale in the surface world, Drizzt confronts enemies at every turn. Yet in Icewind Dale he also finds the friends who will support him in his adventures and offer him that which he most desires: friendship and love.

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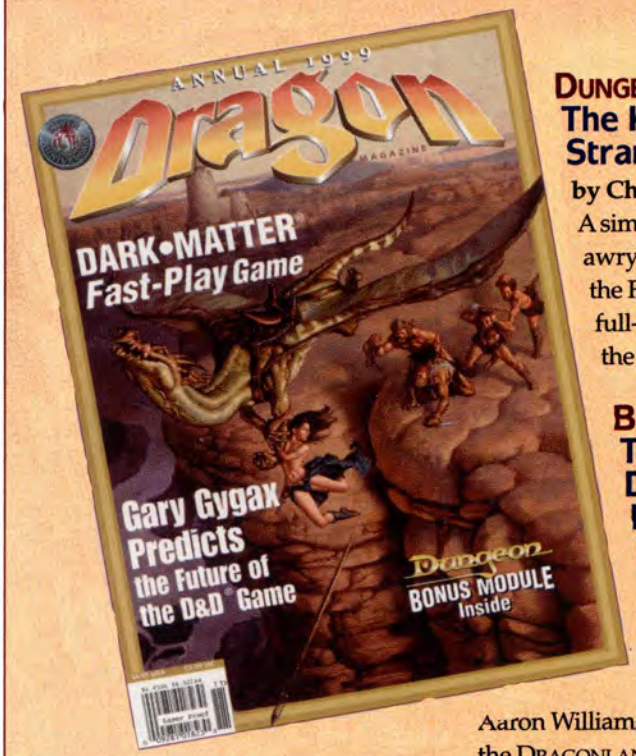

Cover by Mark Zug

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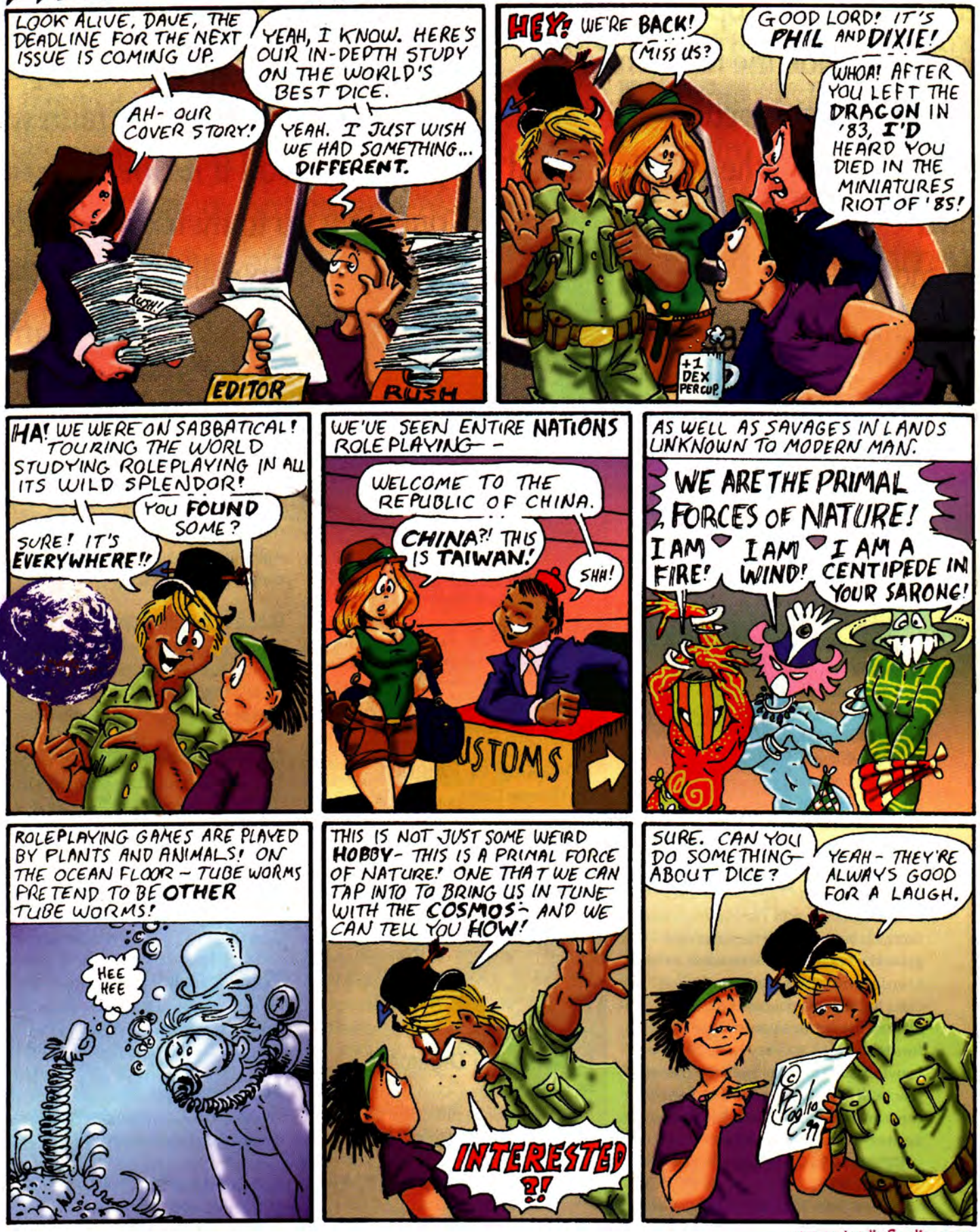
By Phil Foglio


LOOK ALIVE, DAVE, THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS COMING UP.
YEAH, I KNOW. HERE'S OUR IN-DEPTH STUDY ON THE WORLD'S BEST DICE.
AH- OUR COVER STORY!
YEAH. I JUST WISH WE HAD SOMETHING... DIFFERENT.
RUSH!
EDITOR
RUSH
HEY! WE'RE BACK!
MISS US?
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HA! WE WERE ON SABBATICAL! TOURING THE WORLD STUDYING ROLEPLAYING IN ALL ITS WILD SPLENDOR!
YOU FOUND SOME?
SURE! IT'S EVERYWHERE!!
WE'VE SEEN ENTIRE NATIONS ROLEPLAYING—
WELCOME TO THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA.
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SHH!
USTOMS
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I AM WIND!
I AM A CENTIPEDE IN YOUR SARONG!
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HEE HEE
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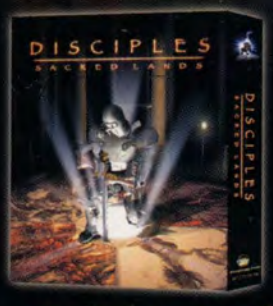

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